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China Scholars Series

Yuen Ren Chao

CHINESE LINGUIST, PHONOLOGIST, COMPOSER, & AUTHOR

With an Introduction by
Mary Haas

An Interview Conducted by
Rosemary Levenson

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Yuen Ren Chao

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INTRODUCTION

It was a happy circumstance for linguists and other scholars at the University of California, Berkeley, when the situation in China in 1947 made it impossible for Buwei and Y.R. Chao to return to their native land as they had planned. They had pulled up stakes from Harvard and had traveled across the continent with the aim of proceeding to China to stay. But it was not to be. And so it came about that they settled in Berkeley where they remain to this day, thirty years later.

From his very earliest years Y.R. Chao had always been keenly aware of and alive to everything in the world about him. His physical surroundings, and his linguistic surroundings all enveloped his consciousness with the thoroughness that became manifest in the future physicist, mathematician, linguist, composer, translator, and world citizen.

He was born at a critical time in China's history. It was a time when some of the people of this ancient nation were beginning to show a willingness to look toward the West in a way that had been completely impossible only a short time before. Though his early education was in the traditional mold, he was among the very first Chinese to receive his advanced education in America. And so he benefited in a way that few others had done before him from the best of the traditional philosophical Chinese training followed by the best of the modern Western scientific training. The difference between the secure world of family and friends in his early years and the highly individualistic world of his American college years was profound. Though he had intended to stay only four years on that first visit, he actually stayed for ten years. He seemed to be made for this new world. He was stimulated by it in a way he had not been stimulated in China. He wanted to learn everything about it, not only American science and philosophy but American customs as well.

The career of Y.R. Chao is a remarkable one. The breadth of his interests is almost overwhelming. To label him as "mathematician" or "linguist" or "musician" is quite misleading; only "scholar" will do. I know of no other person who participates so readily in both of the two cultures--science and humanism--, each of which had become by the middle of the twentieth century a way of life and thought considered completely foreign to the other. But Chao moves easily and articulately in both. In the course of his long career as a teacher, he has taught physics, mathematics, philosophy, the Chinese language, the history of Chinese music, Chinese grammar, Chinese logic, and theoretical linguistics. He laid the foundations of modern linguistics in China in the 1920's and has been an active participant in a number of major projects, both in China and in America, through the years.

In China he and a circle of close associates developed the National Romanization (also known as "Chao Yuen Ren's Romanization"), a phonetic alphabet especially designed for the Chinese language; it was officially adopted by the Chinese government in 1928. Academia Sinica, Peking, was also established in 1928 and within it the Institute of History and Philology. The linguistic activities of the Institute were placed under his direction in 1929. In this capacity he trained students in the techniques of linguistic field work and conducted and directed surveys of Chinese dialects in several provinces.

Later, in America, he joined the Chinese dictionary project of the Harvard-Yenching Institute at Harvard. With the help of Yang Lien-sheng he produced what is still the best dictionary of colloquial Chinese, Concise Dictionary of Spoken Chinese (1946). Traditionally, only the literary language was worthy of study and documentation; hence a colloquial dictionary was a highly innovative undertaking.

His Berkeley years have been productive ones and he has been the recipient of many honors during those and the immediately preceding years. He was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1954-55 and a Fulbright Research Scholar at Kyoto University in 1959. He served as the president of the Linguistic Society of America in 1945 and of the American Oriental Society in 1960. In 1967, the University of California, Berkeley, granted him its highest honor when he was named Faculty Research Lecturer for that year. Two honorary doctoral degrees have also been conferred upon him, Litt. D., Princeton, 1946, and LL.D., University of California, Berkeley, 1963.

It would be quite negligent to close these remarks without some reference to his genius for whimsicality. One of his proudest accomplishments as a translator has been his translation of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland into Chinese! And one of his most delightful feats on the lecture circuit is to record on tape a poem or passage uttered backwards (complete with reverse intonation) in English. The tape is then reversed and played to his astounded audience to reveal a perfectly natural English pronunciation.

The life of such a man is like a work of art. No matter from what angle it is viewed there is always something new to be discerned to serve as a source of wonder, of contemplation, and of inspiration.

Mary R. Haas
Emeritus Professor of Linguistics

June 28, 1977
Department of Linguistics
University of California
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Professor Yuen Ren Chao was born in 1892; his multifaceted life as an outstanding linguist, phonologist, theorist, and teacher spans the China of the Ch'ing dynasty and the Boxer Rebellion to Mao Tse-tung and ping pong diplomacy. His academic career in America began as an undergraduate at Cornell in 1910 when Taft was president and continues actively in 1977 with a busy regime of writing and publishing which he shares with his wife, Doctor Buwei Yang Chao.

The grandson of a magistrate, Mr. Chao's education began in the traditional classical mold at home where he was taught by his grandfather, parents, and tutors. He completed his secondary schooling at Kiangnan High School in Nanking. His decision to take the examinations to study in America under the auspices of the Boxer Indemnity Fund was one of many manifestations of an attitude he describes as being "revolutionary-minded." He came in second out of seventy-two and set sail for America with the idea of becoming an electrical engineer. However, learning the difference between pure and applied science from Hu Tun-fu, he decided that pure science was what he wanted. The sciences got purer and purer as he majored in mathematics (B.A., Cornell, 1914) and philosophy (Ph.D. Harvard, 1918). His first teaching positions were in physics at Cornell, Tsing Hua college and Harvard, and his first publications included piano compositions and "The Fallacy of Learning the High Jump by Using a Paper-filled Pit." in K'o-hsueh,(Science), a journal of which he was a founding member while an undergraduate at Cornell. His first book, the Chinese translation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, (Shanghai, 1922) has gone into several editions, and is a landmark in Chinese literary history; as one of the first books written in pai-hua, it played a part in the literary revolution of the '20s and resulted in a number of little girls called Alissu. He may be known to more people as the composer and singer of popular songs such as "How Can I Help Thinking of You?" than as the world famous scholar that he is.

Informal dialect studies started very early. By the age of five, Mr. Chao spoke Changshu dialect, imperfect northern Mandarin, and read in imperfect Changchow. During school and university days, he exchanged dialects with fellow students, Changchow for Fukienese at school, and Wusih (midway between Changchow and Soochow) at college with M.T. (Minfu Ta) Hu. He learned German and French at Cornell, and Sanskrit and introductory linguistics at Harvard, while working for degrees in mathematics and philosophy.

When Mr. Chao returned to China in 1920 to teach at Tsing Hua, after ten years in the United States, his first major commitment was to serve as interpreter for Bertrand Russell, Dora Black, and occasionally John Dewey. He married another "new-style" Chinese, Dr. Buwei Yang, Japanese-trained surgeon and gynecologist, who is famous for her work as a pioneer in birth control in China and for the introduction of Chinese cuisine to the western world through her books How to Cook and Eat in Chinese (1945) and How to Order and Eat in Chinese (1974).

By 1921, Mr. Chao had decided to devote himself to linguistic studies. The next seventeen years were spent in America, Europe, and China. After three years teaching physics, and introducing Chinese language courses at Harvard while studying linguistics, the Chaos, now with two of their four daughters, traveled through Europe where Mr. Chao studied phonology and experimental phonetics. When Tsing Hua became a university in 1925, Mr. Chao returned to teach phonology at the newly established graduate Institute of Sinology as well as to give an undergradate course in music. Amongst his distinguished colleagues were Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Kuo-wei, and Yinko Tschen.

He was an active member of the Minister of Education's Committee on Unification of the National Language, and of its activist group, the so-called "Society of a Few Men." A pioneer in audiolingual methods of teaching, Mr. Chao's Mandarin records and texts published in '20s and '30s set the model for spoken Mandarin, or p'u t'ung hua, which is followed in China to the present. His system of national romanization, Gwoyeu Romatzyh (G.R.) was officially adopted in 1928 as the second form of the National Phonetic Alphabet.

Academia Sinica was established in 1929 and Mr. Chao became chief of the linguistic section and director of the linguistic surveys. He conducted pioneering dialect surveys, always learning enough of each dialect to put his informants at their ease. A major work completed at this time was his translation, in collaboration with two colleagues, of Bernhard Karlgren's Études sur la phonologie chinoise.

The Marco Polo Incident in 1937 and the Japanese invasion of China forced the Chaos to move west as refugees. From Kunming, they went to the University of Hawaii for a year, then for two years to Yale. Mr. Chao was then invited to come to Harvard to work on the Chinese Dictionary project. After Pearl Harbor, he was asked to direct the U.S. Chinese Army language program at Harvard, leading to an outstanding career as a teacher of the Chinese language. His Cantonese Primer (1947), Mandarin Primer (1956), Readings in Sayable Chinese (1968), and A Grammar of Spoken Chinese (1968), were pioneer achievements and are still widely used.

In 1946, he was asked to organize a series of UNESCO conferences. He was one of the lecturers at the opening session of UNESCO and shared the platform with, among others, Jean-Paul Sartre, Andre Malraux and Julian Huxley.

On his way back to China in 1947, he agreed to stop off at Berkeley, and has remained at the University of California ever since. He was made Agassiz professor in 1952, formally retired from teaching in 1960, and has been active here and around the world ever since.

The Chaos' arrivals in Taiwan are front page news. They are equally welcome in China, where they toured extensively in 1973. Premier Chou En-lai, who had registered to study with Mr. Chao in 1920, though Chao's commitments to Bertrand Russell made this impossible, spoke privately with them for three hours, and asked Mrs. Chao's advice on China's birth control program. Mr. Chao had generous opportunities to meet professional colleagues, many of whom are old students of his. Their two grandsons, Nova's children, spent a month in Peking with them.

Their four daughters have had outstanding careers. Iris Pian is a full professor at Harvard, with joint appointments in the departments of East Asian Civilizations and Music. Her daughter, Canta, who lived with her grandparents and was educated in Berkeley, has her M.A. and is now working for the department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington. Nova Xinna Chao has a very responsible job as professor of chemistry in Changsha, China. Lensey taught mathematics and is now president of a writers' club in Seattle, Bella is a researcher in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Mr. Chao is now working on a system of General Chinese, using two thousand characters chosen from the ten thousand most commonly used characters which can serve as a unifying base for all the varieties of the language. A chapter on it appears in Aspects of Chinese Sociolinguistics: Essays by Yuen Ren Chao* from which the bibliography appearing as an appendix to this book is drawn. He also continues his work on the dialects of Chinatown.

Mr. Chao has made significant contributions to child language studies, sociolinguistics, and posed critical questions in the field of linguistic theory. Perhaps his most famous article in this area is "The non-uniqueness of phonemic solutions of phonetic systems," published in 1934.

Mr. and Mrs. Chao write and study at the big dining room table in their house in the Berkeley hills. He goes at least twice a week to campus to work with his secretary and also serves on committees. They travel regularly; to China in 1973, to Cornell in 1974 for his 60th class reunion, and they are currently planning a trip to the east coast in the fall. They also entertain and are entertained by their innumerable friends. As Mrs. Chao says, "We're busier than ever."

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*Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1976

For a number of years, Professor Yuen Ren Chao's name has been prominent on the ROHO's list of prospective memoirists in the China Scholars Series. Grants from the Center for Chinese Studies and the Joint Stanford-Berkeley East Asia Language and Area Center enabled this office to undertake the project.

Research and Planning

Professor Chao, with his customary modesty, demurred somewhat at the prospect of talking about himself; he prefers to listen to the speech of others. His customary good humor prevailed, however, and he agreed to participate in the project.

The interviewer and her late husband, Joseph R. Levenson, professor of Chinese history at the University of California, Berkeley, had known Mr. Chao for many years at Harvard and Berkeley, and had enjoyed the delights of Mrs. Chao's cuisine and Mr. Chao's erudition and wit. A preliminary meeting in Mr. Chao's university office was held and the main outlines of the memoir agreed upon. Advice and help on topics to be covered and research was was received from members of the faculty at Harvard and Berkeley. At Harvard, Professors John K. Fairbank, Yang Lien-sheng, and Rulan (Iris) Chao Pian, Mr. Chao's eldest daughter, were particularly helpful. At Berkeley, ex-students and colleagues who gave discriminating advice include Professors Edward H. Schafer, David Keightley, and John C. Jamieson. Special thanks go to Professor Laurence A. Schneider, who took his degree in Chinese history at Berkeley, and was visiting for the year from the State University of New York at Buffalo and not only gave excellent bibliographical guidance but also served as joint interviewer for three of the sessions. Detailed agendas were prepared before each interviewing session.

Nine taping sessions of varying length were held from February, 1974 to May, 1974. At one point, a smoking tape recorder abruptly aborted one session to the interviewer's acute distress. Mr. Chao maintained his customary imperturbability.

Editing and Completion

The transcripts of the interviews were edited by the interviewer and a few minor changes made for the purposes of continuity before turning the manuscript over to Mr. Chao. The edited transcript was returned very promptly by Mr. Chao with few emendations with all questions answered. Delays in the production process were caused almost exclusively by the interviewer's health problems. Final typing, proofing and editing were completed by May 1977. Calligraphic additions were kindly made by Mrs. Yoshimi K. Nakamura of the East Asiatic Library. A delightful morning was spent searching for illustrations in the Chaos' vast collection of memorabilia partially contained in three

trunks in their house in the Berkeley hills. After our labors, the Chaos refreshed us all with a delightful Chinese lunch.

A half-hour edited videotape was made at the Chaos' home and Mr. Chao's university office in the fall of 1976, and is available for viewing through The Bancroft Library. It includes Mr. Chao's own rendition of "How Can I Help Thinking of You?" recorded by Pathe in the '30s, Mrs. Chao's accounts of her experiences as a medical student in Japan from 1912-1919, and with an illegal birth control clinic in Peking in 1926, both Chaos' renditions of a T'ang poem chanted in the classical style, and Mrs. Chao's comments on current Chinese politics, particularly her views on the appropriate disposition of Chiang Ch'ing.

An audiocassette of interest also available in The Bancroft Library is a recording of one of Mr. Chao's famous lectures, "Language at Play, and Play at Language", delivered to the Cornell Linguistic Circle on April 2, 1969. It includes reversed English, limericks and puns. A transcript of a similar lecture is included as an appendix to this volume.

Rosemary Levenson
Interviewer-Editor

9 May 1977
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I EARLY YEARS

Family Background

RL: I am very pleased to be here, and thank you for giving me the typescript of your autobiography.*. Perhaps we could start by your telling me about your family background?

Chao: Well, I call myself a native of Changchow.

By the way, I should like to know how I should pronounce Chinese place names and names of persons? Those which are well known in the West? Should I pronounce everything as it is in Chinese or as transcribed, whether Communist or not?

RL: That's an important question. Although this is a tape recording, the way in which it will be available to researchers will be as a bound, typed manuscript. As you speak, I will be taking notes of all Chinese and proper names when I'm not sure of the spelling, and after the interviews are over, I will ask you to check for errors so that the transcription can be done in the way you like.

Chao: Good. My family came from Changchow.

I think most places in China, at least in one atlas, every place name is given with only one spelling, but in this case, the city opposite Taiwan, Changchow with unaspirated "ch," and my home town Ch'angchow with aspirated "ch'" are both spelled "Changchow." For simplicity, I usually omit the aspiration sign in my home town--Changchow.

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*Yuen Ren Chao, Life with Chaos, Volume II, Spoken Language Services Inc., Ithaca, New York, 1975.

Chao: I call it my home town--actually, I was born in Tientsin on the coast east of Peking, one of the northern cities, but all I did in Tientsin was to have been born there. I don't remember it of course. And then our family went to Peking, and I don't remember any of that either. But during my first ten years I lived mostly in the province of what, at that time, was called Pechili in English to distinguish it from Chile in South America. Actually, in Chinese it is Chihli.

Nowadays, it's called Hopei; sometimes it's spelled Hopeh, but recently it's more commonly spelled Hopei.

But during my early years my family moved around a good deal from grandfather down. He held various posts in various cities and when he was waiting between assignments usually he lived in Paoting, which at that time was the capital of the province.

RL: Was it usual to move as often as he did? He was a magistrate, wasn't he, and it seemed that you moved every year.

Chao: Well, every two or three years at least, because we were in three or four different places during my first nine years.

I should tell you who there were in my family from my grandfather down, I had an uncle, who was an elder brother of my father's, and he was usually away. He had one son and two daughters. And one daughter was ten years older than myself, whom I called "Big Sister," and another two years older than myself, whom I called "Second Sister," and then the son was six years older than I was, and I called him "Big Brother." But since we were all so close together, we were practically brothers and sisters. So there were four children in the third generation. My uncle died very early.

Then I had one aunt. I think her age was between my uncle and my father. She was married to a family who lived in Changshu, thirty miles north of Soochow in Kiangsu province. And one time, I think it was--I don't know exactly when, but I was about five years old--she and her children came north to visit with us for quite a while. That was the time when I had the opportunity to hear and learn one of the so-called southern dialects. Because with her servants and my cousins in her family, I had to learn to speak their dialect in order to play with them.

So it turned out that I could speak the Changshu dialect, which was similar to but rather different from my home dialect of

Chao: Changchow--I learned that dialect before I learned my own dialect. Thus, at one time, I was able to talk in imperfect northern Mandarin, read in imperfect Changchow pronunciation, and talk in Changshu dialect. It seemed very natural to me, but it's a rather peculiar combination.

RL: Your grandfather was a high government official, wasn't he?

Chao: Well, he was a magistrate of--I think the most regular work he had was in Ch'ichow in the eastern part of Hopei province, near Shantung, where the dialect is rather close to the Shantung dialect. He had quite an interesting time there. I think he was there twice as magistrate. That was his highest post, higher than some of the other temporary posts in Ch'ichow and Tz'uchow. Tz'uchow means literally "the prefecture of porcelain ware." I still have a memory of displayed porcelain ware on the streets everywhere.

RL: I was interested that he found time to teach you and your cousins.

Chao: Yes, he did. In fact, my father was too busy preparing for his civil service examination. He got the degree of Chü-jen, which corresponds to something like the M.A. So he was rather busier than my grandfather, although his pronunciation sometimes had to be corrected by my mother, who spoke better Mandarin.

At home we spoke the northern dialect, an imperfect kind of Peking dialect. But we always kept our four tones in Mandarin straight. Anybody who spoke with some other accent with other tones would sound out of tune to us. I was rather language conscious just because of the complexity of the dialects around me. My family could speak some of the northern dialect, but the grownups still spoke the Changchow dialect among themselves. However, they spoke Mandarin to us children, the third generation. And we children also spoke the same sort of imperfect Mandarin among ourselves.

Early Education

Chao: When we started to go to school--I think I started to learn characters as early as four years old--then we were taught only the Changchow pronunciation. We even engaged teachers from the South--well, when we speak of the South, we mean the southeastern part of China, the lower Yangtze Valley, where the British journal, the North China Daily News was published. [Laughter] But we called that South. My family engaged teachers from the South to teach us.

Chao: So, I was able to talk in the northern dialect and read in the southern, that is the Changchow speech.

We used cards for studying the characters. Some of them were printed, so they were available--and we did make some of them ourselves. I think it was my father who made the character cards. About an inch and a half or two inches square, with characters on one side and the meaning on the other side pictured--tree or dog, and so forth. But it was hard to learn the abstract words, which you couldn't picture.

We didn't really spend very much time on the characters. We started learning to read pretty young. The usual order of the Four Books was Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, Confucian Analects, and Mencius, but we didn't try to follow the order. In fact, my grandfather, who started teaching us children fairly early, started with Great Learning and went on to the Confucian Analects; we avoided the Doctrine of the Mean because we thought that was really mean. [Laughter] It's one of the hardest books--we left it till pretty late.

RL: I would like to mention right now that you're famous, among other things, for puns. Did you start with punning and the Doctrine of the Mean as mean? [Laughs]

Chao: I think it's so easy to make puns in Chinese that people often just go along and insert them without smiling or anything--this is taken for granted, it's so easy.

And another thing was that in the old practice, different pupils at different ages would read different thing simultaneously aloud. So a half a dozen children or so in school would make this quite complicated noise. And during moments when I wasn't reading aloud myself, I would overhear other people read. So sometimes I would learn by heart some of the passages or even whole pieces of other books before I had actually reached that stage. And that happened both during the day, studying the prose texts, and at night, studying the poems.

In the evening, my mother would teach us the T'ang poems. It's supposed to be much lighter work--well, it was more fun to read the T'ang poems.

My mother was quite musical. She sang the K'un ch'ü, the classical kind of song. And my father taught me to play the

Chao: Chinese flute--[telephone interruption], the reeded flute. I think it was probably mostly from my mother that I inherited my propensity toward music.

RL: How did he teach you? Was it by ear and watching him or did you have a system of notation?

Chao: In the case of the Chinese flute he just taught me how to use the fingers and how to blow. In those days the Chinese notation used was rather sketchy. You were supposed to put in the grace notes yourself.

RL: In your autobiography, you mention hearing workmen's songs--chanties--on your riverboat trips. Did you consciously memorize them and note them down?

Chao: Well, I heard so much of that type of song, and we learned them and sang them at home for fun. Of course in those years I didn't know how to write down the various songs.

RL: I imagine there were many street cries, as there used to be in Europe.

Chao: Yes. Well, the street cries probably were somewhat stereotyped. Each kind of thing that was sold had a special tune repeated over and over again.

RL: This is taking us out of chronology, but did you subsequently collect these at all when you were doing your dialect studies?

Chao: I did occasionally, but not in any systematic way.

RL: And did you sing at all together in the home?

Chao: We sometimes would chant poetry--of course, we also chanted prose at home. Sometimes we did it together, but on the whole we did it separately and there was quite a cacophony. [Laughter]

RL: Looking back on it now with what you know about education, what do you think of that method of learning? It was obviously very successful in some cases.

Chao: Yes. I believe very much in--at least in reading aloud what you've learned. The first time we got a teacher from the South to teach us, he explained character by character, and we were surprised that

Chao: he should explain things, because in the old way we just learned the pronunciation of the characters, and we read aloud and recited aloud without understanding much. And then subsequently gradually as we grew older, things suddenly began to have meaning. And this agrees so much with the later methods, the so-called audio-lingual method, which started to be popular after the war in foreign language teaching in this country. So we had that audiolingual approach to start with.

And also I carried over that old habit learned in China when I was in my sophomore year, I think it was, and I learned German, and my teacher in German at Cornell was himself a German. But following the then prevailing method of foreign language teaching in America, he just made us translate the texts into English, and during the whole semester we'd hardly hear a half a dozen sentences in German. At first I found it rather difficult, because I had to translate one foreign language into another. But while doing my homework I kept following my old Chinese habit of reading aloud from the text, and by the end of the semester I actually got an A translating German into English.

RL: That's remarkable.

Chao: Even though I spent most of my time reading aloud the texts, which were Kleidermachen Leuter and Minna von Barnhelm.

RL: It seemed as though you had a fairly self-contained large family. Did you meet other children and play with them outside the family?

Chao: We didn't play very much with children our age. You see, in those days there were no schools where children of different families would go to the same school. But, in the school we had, the family school, there was a visitor from a friend's family whom we were looking after.

There were rarely as many as ten in a class. And by class I mean those who attended, because we were different grades and were studying different things.

RL: In your autobiography, when you were discussing your grandfather's position, you mentioned beatings for criminals which were a standard punishment, and I was interested in how you worked out the counting system for the strokes. Would you describe those occasions?

Chao: Well, my grandfather was rather lenient, but sometimes in cases where there were severe crimes he had to use punishment and he was not very severely inclined. It was called a beating on the buttocks, but actually it was on the back of the thighs with bamboo canes, a flat bamboo piece. And when--not the executioner--the man who was carrying out the punishment would count, "One, two, three, four." From one to ten in Chinese is all monosyllabic. And then from eleven to twenty, he called, "Ten-one, ten-two, ten-three, etc."--two syllables. But if you counted like that continuously there'd be no time for taking breath. So, he would say, "Ten-one, two, three-one, four, five-one, six;" that way there is one beat. After twenty, "One-twenty-two, three-twenty-four," he'd just say "twenty" twice as fast. So he'd still have time to take a breath. And others who couldn't understand the system thought that he was bribed by the person he was punishing so as to confuse those who heard it. But I counted many times and still I couldn't find any case where they counted wrong! That was an interesting system of counting.

RL: I was interested that you worked out that number system when you must have been quite young. Did you work out any other number games and what was the attitude of the adults--were they proud of you as one might be in the West, or was this just regarded as something trivial and not important?

Chao: I think it was considered something trivial.

RL: Then you also wrote about your games with the magnifying glass.

Chao: Oh yes. I enjoyed very much using a magnifying glass. I forget who it was who gave one to me. Of course, I found rather quickly that when things were too far away, they were blurred. Then I found later that I could hold the magnifying glass some distance from me and things become inverted. I also learned how to have the image focused on a piece of paper to get an inverted image of things. It was very fortunate I didn't try to get an inverted image of the sun [laughter], because that would have focused the sunlight on me. Probably I had tried it on some bright light, and that light was too strong for me so I didn't dare try it on the sun.

RL: You also mentioned that, as a child, you had made a toy telephone, never having seen a real one. I found that very unusual.

Chao: Yes. It was something like the lower part of a Chinese hu-ch'in--two-string violin--except that I used a section of bamboo with some

Chao: kind of strong paper and string attached to a short stick going through the paper. When you pulled on the string, whatever happened to the string would be transferred to the diaphragm. We had two of them, one at each end, so that if you talked at one end, the other end would be the receiver. For near distances, it wasn't much fun since you could hear the sound directly, so we contrived to have two at some distance.

It's no fun if the two persons are too close or see each other. So we tried to turn corners. Yet, if we turned corners, the string, when it touched a wall or something, wouldn't transmit sound since the sound was rather weak. So we managed to keep the string from touching the wall by nailing another short string at the far end of the corner so that the string would be held by another string when we turned a corner. In this way, the speaker and the listener couldn't see each other.

The longest distances we had were through, let me see, several courtyards--two or three hundred feet--along a long corridor. Still, we had to shout from one end to hear the other. And that was the first telephone, before we actually had had any experience with a real telephone!

RL: Were your parents interested in that sort of experiment?

Chao: They didn't pay too much attention to those things. They thought it was all right but didn't put too much importance on it.

Ghosts and Spirits

RL: You mentioned a little bit about ghosts and spirits. I know, in your wife's autobiography* sometimes you tease her a little bit about some of her childhood beliefs that lingered on. Were you frightened as a child?

Chao: Well, I was very much afraid of ghosts, but I didn't believe in them. [Laughter] That was about the way it was. I was afraid of the dark, and I was afraid of ghosts and other things like that. And in one instance, coming to Changchow from the South, I was

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*Buwei Yang Chao, Autobiography of a Chinese Woman, p. 38, John Day Company, New York, 1947.

Chao: sitting on a bed and suddenly, something appeared beside me like an image of someone and I was greatly frightened by that, and I was even more frightened of ghosts since then.

Still, theoretically, I didn't believe in them [laughs].

RL: And yet you saw--did you say a human being or an inhuman being?

Chao: Well, it looked like the shadow of a human being. I still haven't got an adequate explanation.

But something which I could explain later was a shadow of a moving flame of a lamp, an oil lamp with a wick. When I wouldn't go to sleep, people would frighten me--they told me, "Go to sleep, otherwise ch'uch'utz would come." (I didn't know what "ch'uch'utz" were.) But anyway, from the tone in which they mentioned the thing I thought it must be something terrible. And then, one night, I thought I did find "ch'uch'utz."

We used to have a very dim oil light lit through the night. It had maybe a quarter of an inch of wick outside, so it was a very small flame. And the least little breeze would cause the flame to flicker. That caused shadows--lights and shadows around the ceiling. And I decided that that was ch'uch'utz I had discovered. I could explain it, and still I was afraid of ch'uch'utz.

Eclipses, Rites, and Religion

RL: What sorts of ritual or religious practices were observed by your family? You mentioned that your grandfather had to kowtow at the time of the total eclipse of the moon.

Chao: Well, it was sort of semi-religious, because it was not based on any belief in any deities--just some heavenly phenomenon one ought to have reverence for. I think I have it dated somewhere. In fact, I had to go to Dr. Shou-shu Huang of the Goddard Space Flight Center to get the exact date of that eclipse. December 27, 1898, 23 hours, 38 minutes, GMT.

RL: I find it confusing to try to separate out practices and festivals of Confucian or Buddhist type and see what was really going on. It seemed that, at least in your family, your grandfather had a ceremonial obligation as a magistrate. And then you children

RL: enjoyed the festivals so much that you carried out the rites. Is that accurate?

Chao: Yes, that's right.

RL: What about your parents?

Chao: I think they more or less thought that was the proper thing--that was about all--and they didn't take it too seriously. We knew that throughout history eclipses were predictable.

RL: Were other people afraid of them?

Chao: Yes, some of them were--I wouldn't say all, but some were. They were afraid that the heavenly dog would swallow up the moon or the sun. I didn't see a total eclipse of the sun until very much later; this was a total eclipse of the moon.

And this first time was really very impressive. The shadow moved until there was only a small crescent left, and it was supposed to have disappeared, but instead of disappearing, you had a whole shadowy kind of moon because of the earth's shine from the sun. In fact, from the moon you would see an earth with sunset all around. That's what was most impressive. But also it looked a little uncanny with the moon so dark, and with all that noise.

They blew horns and--I don't know if they used guns--but they blew horns and it was noisy. Yeah, we were supposed to beat on pots and pans to scare the heavenly dog.

RL: Did people let off firecrackers?

Chao: I don't remember whether we had firecrackers.

RL: What else along the lines of religion or practices that were close to religion do you remember from your childhood?

Chao: Well, of course, ancestral worship was a regular thing and New Year's and other festivals. But the fifth of the fifth moon, the mid-autumn festival, that was supposed to be secular, and the grown-ups didn't take as much notice of it as the children did. Although we looked forward to it as one of the few days we didn't have school. We had only the New Year vacation of two or three weeks, and the rest of the year no Sundays: every day was a school

Chao: day except the fifth of the fifth moon and the mid-autumn festival.

RL: Hard for modern children to imagine that!

You mentioned ancestor worship. What exactly happened in your household?

Chao: Well, we would have the portraits of ancestors hung up in the hall, and on New Year's we would kowtow to them, and we would make offerings.

RL: Exactly what did a child's kowtow consist of? It's not the same as an imperial kowtow is it?

Chao: What's an imperial kowtow?

RL: I may have got it wrong, but I think it was kneeling, and banging your head on the floor nine times.

Chao: Well, not nine times. Kowtow was just once usually. You'd kneel down, and you didn't have to touch your head to the ground. You'd do that to your elders on New Year's Eve to say good-bye to them, and the next morning you'd wish them "Happy New Year."

Traveling with the Family

RL: You seem to have traveled a great deal as a child.

Chao: Yes. Because of frequent changes in my grandfather's assignments, we moved about once a year. The year I was born, or maybe the next year, we moved from Tientsin to Peking, then to Paoting. As far as I can recall, we lived in:

1895	Tz'uchow
1896	Ch'ichow
1897	Paoting
1898	Chichow
1899	Paoting
1900	Chichow
1901	Changchow

RL: Do you think the traveling was upsetting to you?

Chao: Well, on the whole I enjoyed traveling, except when I bumped my head against the old mule carriages that swung right and left; when it swung to the left I would bump the right side of my head, and so forth. Because those carriages had no rubber wheels. They had wheels reinforced by half inch metal parts on the rim, so it was very hard traveling in them.

But I enjoyed the scenery and the stopping in these hotels, inns, and we enjoyed the coarse food, because the food at home was too refined. We ate corn bread, and so forth, and we didn't eat corn bread much at home. Corn was supposed to be hard to digest.

RL: Would that have been considered peasant food?

Chao: Yes. We would eat rice, which seemed to me much less interesting.

We didn't travel so much on boats except a couple of times, because there were not so many navigable rivers in the North anyway. But we did travel a lot from place to place.

But one night, when everything was packed, and I was sleeping with my mother--I was sleeping outside on a bed, and everything was packed and the room looked deserted, and when my mother went to sleep first, I started to cry, because I felt all alone. Although, ordinarily when she went to sleep I didn't notice.

RL: You said you never traveled after dark. Was this because of fear of bandits?

Chao: Yes, we usually got up quite early. In summer it's light early. We had a very short stop for lunch, and we always found someplace to stay before it was dark.

One occasion that was much later, after my grandfather died and we were on our way back to the South. On that occasion we traveled by boat with my grandfather's bier. And we had two guards assigned by the government with two guns. But those were the years--that was after the Boxer Uprising already and there were a lot of foreigners around. Two soldiers came up to the boat; they said they wanted to borrow our guns for the protection of the country. So we just thought it was wise to let them have them. I suppose we were near Tientsin, near big cities.

RL: Were you ever actually bothered by bandits or thieves?

Chao: No, not that I remember. On the whole we were not molested. But on the way, from Ch'ichow, I think, we stopped one place, and from the boat we could see a temple on shore where there were Boxers practicing rites, using red--they always had red things over their shoulders. In fact, as children we even used chair covers to play Boxers.

RL: What was the feeling of your family in your home, particularly your grandfather, about the troubled times in which you were living. Was he sympathetic at all with the Boxers?

Chao: We were somewhat skeptical because of the way--because they were afraid of foreigners and thought they had too much influence. But still I wasn't sure that the approach of the Boxers wasn't the right approach.

RL: What about the dynasty--was this discussed at all?

Chao: Well, my father sometimes said that things were going so badly he was afraid there was going to be a change, and my mother would say, "S-s-sh, don't talk so loud [laughter], we might be overhead." So we were somewhat conscious that the Ch'ing Dynasty was declining.

And of course also, the racial sentiment was present throughout, because of the domination of the Manchus of the indigenous Chinese.

Fashions

RL: What about practices such as foot binding? Did your mother have bound feet, for example?

Chao: Yes, she had bound feet. I think my two female cousins had bound feet. It lasted quite long. [Pause] It was only in the middle 1900s that there began to be liberated feet, as you'd call it.

RL: And long hair--I imagine the men all wore queues.

Chao: Yes. In fact I wore a queue until a few days before I went abroad to America. And when I asked the barber to cut off my queue, he asked me twice before he dared to do it [laughing], because in one case a wife committed suicide because her husband had his queue cut before going abroad.

RL: Really!

Chao: Sometimes the Chinese students going abroad would have their queues wound on top with a hat on so you wouldn't see it.

RL: Why did you want yours cut off; what did it symbolize to you?

Chao: Well, in my time it was already a general practice. I was in the second batch of Chinese who were sent abroad under the Boxer Indemnity Fund.

RL: What did you wear as a child?

Chao: Well, in those days foreigners described the Chinese "men wearing women's dress and the women wearing men's dress." [Laughter] We had the long gowns on formal occasions. At home we'd have a short jacket, but when we'd go outside we'd always have long gowns. Even in summer we'd wear something similar. And on more formal occasions we'd have a jacket over the long gown. We'd wear the so-called "melon" caps, like half a melon with a knob on top, but I think in summer we didn't wear them.

RL: And bright colors?

Chao: Well, sometimes just plain white or light color. In winter we'd have darker color--wadded cottons. And women would have trousers. And short dresses--they would be half length. And women wore hats in winter. That was--what do you call it?--long, about three inches wide in front and long in back behind the hair--that was the style for women's hats. And women didn't wear queues except as a child. When they grew up, they'd have a hairdo. Sometimes women spent a lot of time with their hairdo, combing and putting in flowers, and so forth.

RL: Very beautiful, I think, some of the styles of that period. But very complicated.

Chao: Yeah. Well, my aunt from Changshu who visited with us in the North would spend the better part of the morning having her hair done properly!

RL: What was your attitude to foreigners as a child? Perhaps you didn't see any until you were going South after your grandfather's death.

Chao: Well, I had a foreign doctor to treat me for a hernia and saw him again a couple of times. But I didn't have any special impression, really, for or against them.

RL: Did your grandfather talk about western influences?

Chao: Not much. He didn't talk about it a lot, not that I remember.

RL: Or about foreign innovations, things like steamships, and perhaps railroads, guns--?

Chao: I don't recall what my grandfather said or even what my parents said.

RL: It's curious, when one reads the history of China of that period the impact of the West seems to be one of the most troubling and important things, particularly at the end of the 19th century.

Life in Changchow and Soochow

RL: After your grandfather died, what happened to your family?

Chao: Well, of course, we had to leave for the South. It was quite a trip from Ch'ichow to Tientsin. That was one of the few times we took a boat to Tientsin. That was the first time I saw the sea--from Tientsin to Taku, that is the name of the port of Tientsin. We had fair wind that day, and we made that trip very quickly on the river boat to the ship. And when we went out near the ship, it was very windy and the junk rocked quite a lot. But by the time we went on board, it looked as if we were in the city again, because the big ship, the S.S. Hsin Fung--I remember the name, but I've forgotten the name of the company--the S.S. Hsin Fung sailed from that port, from Tientsin, to Shanghai.

RL: Was that a steamship?

Chao: Yes. We went past the so-called blackwater ocean. Actually, it was dark blue. And the sea was yellow because of the Yellow River, and when we were nearing Shanghai the sea was also yellow because of the river, Yangtze.

It was quite a new experience for us, different from the life we had on the river junks. And the first time I saw an electric

Chao: bulb, one of those 16-candle power bulbs--was between two cabins, so that each cabin would have 8-candle power. That was in the hold. And there were a few foreigners on board, and we got to see them play cards, and one thing I remembered of what they said I couldn't understand to this day. I heard more than once I think something like, "Mia mia bolo bolo." I never knew what language it was or what it meant. They tried to talk Chinese to me, but I couldn't understand their Chinese.

I was very much seasick the first couple of days, but then I got my sea legs and enjoyed sitting outside. Before that I used to enjoy seeing--well, I was very timid about most things about boats, and so forth--I enjoyed seeing a thunder storm. And thunder storms at sea were even more impressive than on land, because I could see the streaks of lightning right from the water.

RL: Then where did you settle?

Chao: We went to Shanghai for some days. Grandfather Feng Kuang-yü and some of my uncles on my mother's side came to meet us. We spent some time in Shanghai. Then we took the riverboat back to Changchow. And in those days you would have one small steamer drawing maybe half a dozen junks in a string, and we would take one of them back to Changchow.

My house, which I saw quite recently [1973]--it's still there--was right next to a river.

RL: How did it impress you after all these years? Was it much changed?

Chao: Well, my house was hardly changed, except that one long corridor along the various courtyards--each courtyard belonged to one branch of the family, from my great-grandfather down--that was open; the top was taken off, so it became a lane instead of an inside corridor. Some of my second cousins still occupy one of the courtyards, and the others were divided up. Of course, nowadays nobody owns any land, so they just assign various people to a residence at very low rent.

That part where we occupied still looked about the same, and also the part that my cousins occupied looked about the same. And the street had hardly changed. The only noticeable change was that the western part of the city, which wasn't built up, now is full of life.

Chao: The same is true of Nanking, which we passed through briefly recently. The northwestern part was quite wild and open, and now it's all built up. But the original places are still about the same.

RL: It must have been a curious feeling to go back there.

Chao: The same in Peking. Outside the Tien An Men, the Square of Heavenly Peace, the central part, they've widened the streets to fifty yards--very wide--and a lot of changes in the buildings. But in the back streets, it was still much the same. We could find the house we were married in in 1920.

RL: What did you do about schooling when you were back in Changchow?

Chao: I went to--let me see--I went back in 1902 and we had a teacher who wasn't very efficient. I was something of a truant [laughing] at that time and for a couple of years. My father taught me for a year, and I wasn't very attentive; he taught us Tso's Chronicles, the first time we learned to chant prose.

And then very quickly--my mother and father died in the same year, in 1904--and I was sent to stay with my mother's older sister in Soochow. They were from Changchow but they lived in Soochow. I think now they spell it "Soo-chow," to distinguish it from Suchow, in northwest China in Kiangsu province. This Soochow was near Shanghai. It's between Nanking and Shanghai.

My hometown is near Shanghai; Soochow is between Shanghai and Changchow. I stayed there for one year with my aunt, whom I called "Godmother." And her eldest son was supposed to be my teacher; he taught me for one year there.

I would read in Changchow dialect but outside I learned to speak the Soochow dialect. The district name of Soochow is Wu, so that is the dialect--the Wu dialect per excellence.

RL: So by then how many Chinese dialects did you speak comfortably?

Chao: Well, I could speak Mandarin, Changchow, Soochow, and Changshu. I could speak four.

RL: At age of--?

Chao: By the age of twelve.

RL: You mentioned the death of your parents. How did they die? It must have been a great blow to you.

Chao: Yes. My mother died of consumption and my father died of dysentery within a half a year of her.

RL: And you were an only child.

Chao: Yes. Although my three other cousins were practically their children, because their parents passed away much earlier.

And then in 1906 I returned to Changchow when my great uncle's second wife returned to Changchow to take care of the children in the Changchow home.

"Foreign" School

Chao: Then I went to the first so-called "foreign school." By "foreign school" we meant a school in which children from many different families go together.

RL: But all Chinese.

Chao: Yes. Then we had all different subjects taught--mathematics, and natural science, physical exercise. And the teacher of English and physical exercise was a graduate of St. John's University in Shanghai. He was from Shanghai--by the name of Shen. He would talk at length in English and nobody understood what he was talking about!

Last year I went to that place. There's still a school, rebuilt. It's called Ch'i Shan School. I spent one year there. That was really a school in the modern sense.

RL: That was very progressive of your family, wasn't it, at that point, to send you to a foreign school?

Chao: Yes, well, we could have stayed home; five or so of my family did. Another of my big family, a second cousin, also went to the same school.

RL: Was this decision criticized at all in the family?

Chao: No, no. It began to be the thing to do. I spent one year there. And then after that, from 1907 to 1910, I spent three years in Nanking, that is, apart from vacations, during which I always came

Chao: back, oh, on some vacations I stayed in Nanking. I went to Kiang-nan High School--it really was a sort of junior college. But I was in the preparatory department of that place, so that was equivalent to high school.

There of course there were many more subjects taught.

RL: You say that you heard English for a year in the Ch'i Shan School--was it a serious attempt to teach you--?

Chao: No, no. [Laughing] I suspect Shen was just showing off. Nobody understood him. But in Nanking we had really regular, serious lessons and learned English.

In fact, it was in Nanking that I met my first American teacher, David J. Carver.

RL: What impression did he make on you?

Chao: Well, I thought, "Now, this is the real English language." But he was from Nashville, Tennessee and had a Nashville accent. So he would say "Dzero" for "zero" and "liamp" instead of "lamp," and so forth. And I thought, "This is the real English." [Laughter]

RL: Did you find English hard to learn--obviously, you're a linguist and perhaps that's a silly remark.

Chao: No I didn't. Of course, he talked slowly to us students. We had the Jones reader, I think, Jones Third Reader.

RL: I've heard so many Chinese students complain bitterly about the problems of learning English, particularly in Hong Kong. Was there much complaint in your school?

Chao: Not that I noticed. We had some very good Chinese teachers of English.

RL: What other things did you learn?

Chao: Well, we learned--natural science. Yes, we had a demonstration, a dissection of a dog, the whole of several classes together.

RL: That was very advanced, wasn't it?

Chao: Yes.

Chao: And drawing--we had a Japanese teacher with a translator.

RL: That's curious. Was he teaching Japanese style painting?

Chao: No. I think he just taught us drawing and painting.

RL: With western perspective?

Chao: Yes.

RL: I meant to ask you this earlier when we were talking about music whether your family painted as many scholar-intellectuals did?

Chao: Occasionally, but not much.

RL: And were you taught to paint in--

Chao: Well, I would draw--mountains and clouds and such. They didn't put special emphasis on it.

RL: It's very interesting that you should have had a Japanese teacher. Had he studied in Europe?

Chao: I don't know.

RL: Did you enjoy it?

Chao: Yes. Oh, we had not only physics, but we also had military drill in Nanking, and we were given guns!

RL: Real guns?

Chao: Real guns.

RL: But not real ammunition?

Chao: Not loaded, no.

RL: Was it a mission school?

Chao: It was a government school, provincial. I think I was in Nanking when the Emperor and the Empress Dowager died, and during those days, we were already very much revolution-minded, so that during the ceremony, the funeral for the Empress Dowager, when we were ordered to kowtow--all the students--and the master of ceremonies

Chao: said, "Commence lamentations," and we all laughed aloud. And you couldn't tell when we were prostrate whether we were laughing or crying. [Laughter]

RL: Would you have been punished severely if you'd been caught?

Chao: I don't know. It depends on who the authorities were there then. It was only a couple of years before the Revolution.

RL: You say you were already revolutionary. What was influencing you? Were you reading newspapers or hearing speeches, pamphlets--?

Chao: Well, that's one thing, but all along somehow we were conscious that we were Chinese under the domination of the Manchus--foreigners. It was felt by the majority somehow--I mean they didn't dare speak aloud about it.

RL: Then, your feelings, or the feelings of your schoolmates, were much more against the Manchus than against Westerners?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Was this school all for boys?

Chao: All for boys, yes.

RL: What happened to your cousins?

Chao: They all studied at home.

RL: So it's a little later that girls get the chance to go to school?

Chao: Yes.

I still kept up a correspondence with the family of my first American teacher; of course, he passed away some years ago.

RL: Was he connected with a religious group?

Chao: Not especially. He was employed by the government school there. I don't remember how he'd been introduced--but he did try to interest us in the Christian church. It was at his house that I remember singing some hymns and so forth. But he didn't especially try to convert us.

RL: Were you tempted to convert? Did it attract you at all, or not?

Chao: I don't think I was ever attracted to regular membership of a church. The nearest I got was when I later studied at Harvard. My room was right near the church where Samuel Crothers, the fine essayist, preached. Because he was a good essayist, his sermons were very good to listen to, so I often went there. But he was a Unitarian. People didn't think Unitarianism was the most proper form of Christianity.

Youth's Improvement Society

Chao: In this period I've been talking about, we organized a society for benefits to the youths, a youth improvement society or something like that. We bought a number of books to form a loan library, in which there were a lot of modern books--translations of foreign works and so forth, including scientific books. It was really a very modest one. We just spent our very modest allowances, and books were cheap, of course, then, these Chinese translations of foreign works.

RL: And how were these activities regarded by various authorities at school and at home?

Chao: They rather encouraged us to do that. We met at different homes.

RL: So this was not disapproved of but was given some--perhaps considerable support by the students' families?

Chao: As far as I remember, they didn't give any extra support, but they approved of what we were doing.

RL: In your autobiography, when you were discussing the Youth's Improvement Society, you mentioned that you borrowed a copy of Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's journal, Hsin-Min Ts'ung-Pao. I wanted to ask you how influential that was.

Chao: I think it was quite an influential journal in those days; it lasted quite a few years. Lots of people were interested in new things. Of course, this was always written in the classical language.

RL: It's hard for me to put into words, and it may be hard for you to answer it. Your early education was exclusively classical.

Chao: Yes. Of course, everybody's was.

RL: What sort of effect did it have on you to move into this twentieth-century material, whether western works in translation or the writings of a man like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, who was interested in bringing modern ideas to Chinese. Do you remember how you felt about it?

Chao: Well, I was always interested in the new things but through the classical language. Of course, the later practice of writing in the colloquial didn't start until after Hu Shih's 1917 "first gun" we call it, for revolution in the language, advocating writing the language the way you talked. And the funny thing about that 1917 article was that that article itself was written in the classical style [laughter] because he wasn't used to writing in the colloquial.

To be sure, a lot of old novels, such as The Dream of the Red Chamber, were written consciously in the colloquial style; at least the dialogues were given in colloquial form. That's not the usual way people write about things in general. Or even familiar letters between members of the family, you still wrote in the classical language.

RL: Did it seem to you like an opening of the door to leave the classics and move into the world of people like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and western authors in translation?

Chao: It seemed to me something in addition rather than completely discarding the classics. When I went to school in Nanking in the late 1910s, we still had courses in the classical language and wrote essays in classical form.

RL: So it didn't create a conflict situation for you. Other than Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, were you reading works of Sun Yat-sen or other revolutionary materials at this time?

Chao: As far as I can remember, we knew about him more or less second hand, rather than directly. We learned those things from Liang Ch'i-ch'ao's journal as well as other new magazines.

RL: Was there any danger attached to reading and circulating such materials at that time, with the Manchus still in power?

Chao: The Manchu Dynasty lasted till 1911; advocating the use of the colloquial didn't start until 1917. Everybody took for granted that you wrote in the classical style.

RL: I didn't mean a question of which language to use, whether wen yen or not, but in reading material, some of which was proscribed, or reading about it, did this put you in any risk from the authorities?

Chao: I suppose if we had openly advocated these things, it could have been unsafe. We took it for granted that things were changing, and even in the early 1900s, my father would say, "Things are getting so bad, I'm afraid there's going to be some big change." So people rather expected things were going to change in the declining years of the Manchu Dynasty.

Sixty Years of Diaries

RL: Something else that you started very early was keeping a diary.

Chao: Yes. I think since 1906, I've kept it almost every day, with a few exceptions, down to the present.

RL: Were you following a Chinese tradition? What made you start with it?

Chao: I don't know. My father kept a diary, although not quite consistently all the time. It was very common; I think some of my cousins kept diaries. And I kept it up. Of course, in those days, everybody wrote in the classical idiom, and I kept it up--writing in the classical style--even after I came to America to study. I wrote in classical Chinese in my diary, so that a phrase "going downtown to get my eyeglasses" wouldn't be written in the idiom of everyday speech but still in quite classical form, translating literally "downtown" and "eyeglasses."

RL: I got the impression from talking to some of my Chinese friends that diaries, in many cases at least, were more like date books, a record of activities either completed or planned, whereas some of the quotations you insert in your autobiography are quite introspective and are more like a journal--a record of feelings and thoughts.

Chao: Yes, I did go into that to some extent. But on the whole, I emphasized giving the outline of the day's activities, without going into too great detail. Because I noticed that some people who tried to write an essay--like Hu Shih who wrote an essay almost everyday--that is such a job that you couldn't keep it up all the time. The one reason that I succeeded in keeping it all the time was that I made it simple and almost always in the form of an outline.

RL: You mentioned that although you lost many things in China as a result of the war with Japan, your diary was saved along with a large number of photographs because you sent them to America. What did you plan to do with it? You must have had many things that were important, some of which were lost.

Chao: Well, I thought that those things couldn't be recovered, whereas books--even old books--perhaps could be found in libraries and so forth. Those were especially personal things, the diaries and the photographs I had taken myself. About forty-five hundred of them, I think, I sent to my friend, Robert W. King of the Bell Telephone labs in New York during the war, in 1937--one of the few things I saved.

RL: Do you still keep your diary?

Chao: Yes. Now I write in my diary in English with an outline in Chinese. It's bilingual now.

Boxer Indemnity Fund Scholarship

RL: When did you decide that you would like to study in America?

Chao: Well, I think my teacher, Carver, had some influence, and then, also I was interested in science. That was a good reason to complete the examinations to study abroad.

The first class came out in 1909. I was in the second class. It was after the United States decided to refund from the Boxer Indemnity. There were quite a few classes. I think the Boxer Indemnity Fund lasted till 1933 or thereabouts.

RL: The source of the money was Chinese, wasn't it?

Chao: Yes. The Chinese paid America, and America refunded it.

RL: Because of the damage done by the Boxers?

Chao: That's right, yes. Later on, I was in charge of the students who were sent out under these auspices, from 1932-1933 and was responsible for winding up affairs after the last students had graduated.

RL: What was the procedure for the examination? I think the old examinations in the classical system of education have been very well described. But I've never read how the Boxer Indemnity students were examined.

Chao: Well, we had to have been to some modern schools. And they would have the students just go and take examinations for different subjects--English and Chinese. The theme for Chinese composition was "Without ruler and compasses one cannot form circles and squares (sic) from Chapter four of Mencius. I don't remember what the English was.

RL: How long did you have to write in Chinese?

Chao: Well, we had one morning to write compositions. And then another morning or afternoon for English. And then if you passed Chinese and English, then you'd go on to the other subjects. I even tried some Latin which I'd studied for just a few months. That was not required.

RL: What was required--mathematics?

Chao: Yes, mathematics, some science--physics, botany, zoology, physiology, and chemistry--history--Chinese history.

RL: No European or American history was expected of you?

Chao: No, no. We took exams in at least half a dozen subjects. Later, I found I was listed as number two out of seventy-two who qualified.

RL: Then after you were selected, did you have any sort of indoctrination or training program before going?

Chao: No, nothing at all. We went--on our way out we stopped in Shanghai where we had a reception by the American consulate, and then they told us about how things are in America in an informal way.

RL: But had you any experience or practice in things like Western table settings--using knives and forks instead of chopsticks?

Chao: I don't remember anything like that. I'd practiced wearing Western clothes. And we were told that in our outfit we should order one cap and one derby. [Laughter] Derby on formal occasions, cap on informal occasions. But after I went to America, I had very few occasions on which I needed to wear the derby.

RL: Western clothes must have seemed very constricting after the--looseness--

Chao: Yes, they weren't as comfortable as the dress I was used to.

I wasn't very seasick. Of course, the coastwise ship was much rougher than the big one. It was the SS China that we took from Shanghai to San Francisco.

RL: And I suppose you stopped in Hawaii.

Chao: Yes, we stopped in Hawaii. We had a reception, and we had sandwiches because Hawaii was then called the Sandwich Islands. [Laughter] I remember being much impressed over the outlook in Hawaii. Of course, it didn't look like America we were thinking of.

RL: How many students were there?

Chao: We had a class of seventy-two going to various places after they arrived.

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to say about those years before you went to America?

Chao: Well, in contrast to the recent disappointment about Kohoutek, we had a great time seeing Halley's comet, just before I left for America, that summer in Peking. It was really impressive. You know in those north Chinese houses with square courtyards, that comet swept from one corner of the courtyard right to the other corner--extended over the whole sky. It was really bright. Some people were scared that something would happen, but most people were interested in seeing it as a phenomenon.

RL: How were the Boxer Indemnity students assigned to American universities in 1910? Did you have any choice?

Chao: Yes. We were rather free in having our choice.

RL: Why did you choose Cornell?

Chao: I think one reason was that Hu Tun-fu or T.F. Hu, five years ahead of me in the class of 1909, who was one of the three leaders of our group, explained to me about things and told me about Cornell. So I chose it.

He was also the one who told me the difference between pure science and applied science. As a matter of fact, when I started, I thought that China was in need of engineering and I was going to go into electrical engineering. After he explained the difference between pure science and applied science, I decided that pure science was the thing for me. After a while, I made it so pure that it was mathematics. [Laughter]

RL: You've in a sense answered the next question I have. Was there any pressure put upon the students to choose so-called useful sciences?

Chao: No. Apparently there was no special pressure. Usually, there was some urging for you to take subjects that might be useful for the reconstruction of the country. But, on the whole, students could take anything they liked. For example, Hu Shih was in our class; he was going to study agriculture because he and others thought it had immediate importance to China.

Because the underclassmen--freshmen and sophomores--were in the lower part of the campus and had to walk the better part of a mile to the agricultural college between classes (in those days there were, I think, seven minutes rather than ten minutes between classes), it was too much of a job [laughter]; so he gave up and stayed down in the arts college.

Schneider: I think you just changed the whole interpretation of modern Chinese history! [Laughter] So Hu Shih decided to go into cultural reconstruction because he was on the wrong side of the hill!

RL: Were the students all men?

Chao: Yes, all men. There were a couple of girls, but they were not under the same auspices. There were about fourteen--I don't remember whether there were fourteen from this group to Cornell or whether there were fourteen in the class of Cornell. There were more than a dozen Chinese in our class. Hu Shih was in our class. And we had M.T. Hu in our class.

RL: Who?

Chao: M.T.--full name, Minfu Ta Hu. And there was S.S. [Shien-sheng] Hu. Well, other than Hu Shih, the others were cousins. And so there were three Hus in our class and we couldn't tell "Who was Hu." [Laughter]

At that time Hu Shih spelled his name Suh Hu, instead of Hu Shih. "Shih" is the standard Wade-Giles spelling in the Chinese order. Suh Hu is the foreign order, with the last name last. The reason for that "h" is that it had an entering tone, and he was a student at Shanghai, where they had the entering tone, so "suh" really stands for the syllable [sə?]; the "h" stands for the glottal stop [?]. But everyone called him Suh Hu.

RL: This reminds me of something I wanted to ask you. Exactly how do you like your name presented now?

Chao: I think recently I've consistently used Yuen Ren Chao. Very often, people are abbreviating, using initials for Chinese names, if they see a small letter in the second syllable they don't use it, and you get one initial. And since Chinese names are so short, there's too much chance for confusion.

RL: There was something else I wanted to ask. Running right through your life, evidently from a very early age, you were fascinated by the differences in dialects and were exposed to a lot of dialects perhaps earlier than some Chinese because your family moved so much. Was this interest shared by other students or were you exceptionally interested in this?

Chao: I think, on the whole, the Chinese have been language-conscious or dialect-conscious because of the variety of dialects they have come into contact with in what we call the South, Shanghai and the lower Yangtze river region. There is usually a mixture of speakers of various dialects, and you have to get used to understanding various dialects. In Shanghai, for example, most of the people speak the Shanghai dialect, but the coolies (rickshaw men and so

Chao: forth) usually come from the north of the river where they speak a variety of southern Mandarin. We call it the River North dialect; actually it's a form of southern Mandarin, not far from that of Nanking, which is the standard for southern Mandarin.

RL: So you wouldn't say, perhaps, that you were exceptionally interested?

Chao: Not exceptional, compared with some of the others of my acquaintances of relatively the same age.

YUEN REN CHAO

c. 1896 Yuen Ren, Grandfather, Big Brother Cousin (Yang) P'eng-Shih

c. 1902 (Maternal) grandparents seated, Mother standing behind Grandpa's right shoulder, Yuen Ren (in black vest) standing

c. 1910

1919

Continental Hotel in Peking, c. 1921

BUWEI YANG CHAO

1911

1916

c.1918

II STUDENT YEARS IN AMERICA, 1910-1920

Cornell, 1910-1915, B.A. in Mathematics

RL: I'd like to start asking you about your studies in America. When you arrived here, in San Francisco, you said you were met by Chiang Monlin?

Chao: That's right. He was a senior at Cal at that time.

RL: I've read some of his autobiography.* I wondered how you remembered him, whether you remained friends, and whether you could expand a little on your comments on him.

Chao: I didn't see much of him at that time but of course, I saw a lot of him in later years. He was one of the leaders on this sort of reception committee for us--a local student body. We stayed only a few days, I think, in San Francisco. We arrived more or less about the time of the admission of California to the States; there was a big celebration on the streets, and I thought America was always like that. [Laughter]

We saw on our sightseeing tour the ruins of the San Francisco Fire; I called it the Earthquake, but they called it the Fire. So the ruins in 1910 had still not been all cleared. Only four years.

RL: What had you expected of America, and how did your impressions differ from your expectations when you first came?

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*Chiang Monlin, Tides from the War, A Chinese Autobiography (New Haven, 1947).

Chao: San Francisco, of course, was impressive and more or less looked the way I thought it would be. But when we went east and settled down in Ithaca, New York, and at Cornell University, I was so surprised at all those little houses that looked like shacks and not like the cities I was expecting to see from postcards in which there are usually rows and rows of apartment buildings like the appearance of Beacon Street in Boston. It was only when I went to the campus that I began to see some of the bigger buildings.

RL: How were you received by the American authorities and the students at Cornell?

Chao: There had already been some Chinese students at Cornell. So we had a very good reception. Also we had senior members among the Chinese student body there. There was quite a number of us--fourteen, I think--entering the class of 1914. Speaking now, in 1974, I expect to go to my sixtieth class reunion next June. It was 1910, so I belong to the class of 1914. Hu Shih was in that group of '14. He was known at that time as Suh Hu, as I said before.

RL: Were your roommates and friends mostly Chinese?

Chao: I didn't have so many American friends then. I did have a couple--later I lost contact with them--but the majority were Chinese.

RL: Was this because it was easier for you?

Chao: Yes. There was more to talk about, and I suppose that's natural also for minority students from other groups.

RL: Your formal study load seemed extraordinarily heavy--eighteen units and eight courses. Was this usual?

Chao: Apparently many of us took that load; I think eighteen was the maximum, not the normal load. Some courses needed a lot of homework but some didn't; most of the work was done in class.

RL: Then you mentioned the Cavendish experiment on gravity?

Chao: Yes. I still think that is the most impressive experiment in physics I've ever seen, the idea that simply everything attracts everything else. Before that demonstration, students would usually think of the law of universal gravitation as having to do with moving the planets around the sun--that sort of thing. But

Chao: in that experiment, Professor [E.L.] Nichols just had two heavy lead balls attracting small balls suspended from a fine string.

At first the distances were equal so the attractions were equal. Then, the teacher shifted the two big lead balls so that one would attract one small ball one way and the other, the other way. Then the string turned, with a mirror attached to it, reflected on the wall, it caused the reflection to move. When the students saw this, they all stamped their feet on the floor. That was when I learned that the way to express interest for a student was to stamp your feet on the floor! So that showed that everything attracted everything. [Laughter]

RL: Was Einstein's work being talked about yet in your courses?

Chao: That was before Einstein's relativity theory.

RL: Yes, but I think he was publishing already in 1905. I just wondered if any of his ideas were being discussed.

Chao: No. We didn't hear about relativity at Cornell, I don't think.

RL: Since I did mention Einstein, perhaps out of the correct place, do you remember when his ideas first hit the American physics community, of which you were, at times, a member?

Chao: I can't remember exactly when, but certainly it made a great stir; people had to revise their ideas about classical physics.

The first time I met him was years afterwards at Princeton when he was at the Institute for Advanced Study. He didn't talk physics with me; he asked me about ways to learn Chinese.

RL: Was he seriously interested, or was this for a theory of linguistics?

Chao: I think at that time he had some interest in possibly going to China--practical questions.

RL: Did you talk about music at all at that time?

Chao: No.

RL: I am impressed with the range of courses you took.

Chao: I don't think I tried to learn <u>everything</u>. I just couldn't concentrate and spread my interest over a number of things. As

Chao: long as I satisfied the requirements of my major, I could branch out into various things. Actually, I didn't stop reading or thinking about any of the subjects I was interested in, so that it wasn't such a difficult change when I formally changed from one department to another.

RL: In spite of having such a heavy load, I noticed that both as an undergraduate and as a graduate student, you took correspondence courses.

Chao: Yes. I took a correspondence course in French from the International Correspondence School in Scranton, Pennsylvania. In those days, there were no disc recordings for everyday use. They sent you wax cylinders and then even made you do exercises--pronounce French in the wax cylinders and send them back for correction. It was very good. Unfortunately, maybe that was a too expensive procedure; so that school wound up, and I didn't quite finish my course.

RL: I think it's very interesting to record that. Was that sometime between 1910 and 1914?

Chao: That was between 1910 and 1920, I'm sure--or was it? I think it was when I went to Harvard; it was after 1915.

RL: And that was, in effect, the precursor of the modern language labs. Could you play back the cylinder on which you had recorded your French?

Chao: Yes. Of course, those wax cylinders do not last long if you play them too many times; they'll wear out.

Then there was an Esperanto movement, and one of my schoolmates even used an Esperanto name. He was Wu Kang; he sometimes signed himself K. Wu. Then he added an Esperanto first name--Solvisto--Solvisto K. Wu. Then, one of the upper classmen, Mr. T.F. Hu (who lives now in Seattle), after he graduated from Cornell in 1909, went back to China and taught in the same school where I studied. He started a school in Shanghai, and he named it Universitato Utopia--utopian university. [Laughter]

RL: Was Esperanto popular among the American students also?

Chao: I wouldn't call it popular, but many students were interested.

The Student Science Journal, K'o Hsueh

RL: Would you tell me about K'o Hsueh--Science?* It seemed to me an extraordinarily ambitious idea for a number of Chinese students abroad to publish a science journal for distribution in China. For how many years was it published?

Chao: The journal began in 1915 and ran until 1950.

RL: What were its purposes?

Chao: On the whole it was rather a society to encourage or popularize science than to carry on original research. After a couple of years, the headquarters moved back to China and expanded. In fact, there was a science society headquarters in Shanghai, and the association was pretty good all those years.

RL: Can you give a rough figure for the number of subscribers to the journal while you were the American editor? [1915-1916]

Chao: It's hard to tell. Probably, if it was up into the upper hundreds, we would consider that a good circulation

RL: That really is very few, isn't it?

Chao: Yes, as journals go.

RL: And were your subscribers individuals, or would some schools subscribe?

Chao: Yes, there were schools that subscribed to it as well as individuals.

RL: Did you publish current research work?

Chao: Sometimes we reported on current work we read in western magazines, journals and so forth. Not so much summaries from encyclopedic articles.

RL: Do you still have copies?

Chao: I have volumes one, two, three, and four. I have the first four volumes bound. They averaged about a hundred and twenty pages.

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*First issue January, 1915, 121 pp. with eleven articles, science news and an appendix "March of Peace" composed by Y.R. Chao.

RL: How often did it come out?

Chao: It was a monthly.

RL: That's an extraordinary amount of work; how did you students manage?

Chao: Yes. In the early days we were all students.

RL: It must be quite a rare item now.

Chao: I can't think of anything like it in those days. Later, the same Science Society published Science Pictorial, a similar magazine with more pictures, at the same time with Science.

RL: Do you remember what a subscription cost?

Chao: I can't remember now.

RL: Then, when the management was moved entirely to Shanghai, how was it funded? Was it able to pay its own way?

Chao: No, it still had to ask contributions. One thing about this magazine is that I think it was in the first number, or one of the first, that Hu Shih wrote an article on the importance of modern punctuation for purposes of science and gave certain rules about the use of punctuation marks.

RL: Were these rules adopted and found useful?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How long did you stay associated with it?

Chao: I think I was a member of the Science Society all along, although later, in the later years when it was self-supporting, I think I paid the annual nominal sum due but didn't have to make a contribution.

RL: Were they ever able to pay their writers?

Chao: I don't think their writers were ever paid for their articles.

Musical Studies, Finances and Outings

RL: Was it at Cornell that you first took piano lessons?

Chao: Yes.

RL: What did you enjoy studying on the piano?

Chao: I liked Burgmüller--his easy pieces. It just happened that my teacher assigned it to me and I liked the book.

RL: Who influenced your ideas in composition?

Chao: I was interested in harmony, and Chinese music is usually in single lines or at most in octaves, or sometimes with other notes for bringing out the beats. On the whole, it's one line of melody, and I was interested in harmonic or contrapuntal composition. In most of my compositions, I would have some Chinese theme in the melody (some of our tunes are entirely pentatonic), but the harmonies still were western--any harmony would be western.

RL: Were you aware at all of what people like Bartok and Stravinsky were doing with their national musical traditions?

Chao: No, I haven't followed that. I've heard their music. After listening to Bartok, I found that Stravinsky was quite musical; after listening to Schoenberg, I found Bartok musical. [Laughter] I still am rather old fashioned in my preferences of styles in western music.

RL: How did you manage for money on your scholarship?

Chao: Things were really very cheap in those days. I think our board was three and a half dollars a week, and we had steak for breakfast. [Laughter] You didn't have to have steak. I bought a $350 piano for two hundred something and easy payments--a few dollars a month. So, we still had money to spare for various things.

When we started that Chinese journal, Science, we contributed out of our own funds since it wasn't a popular magazine and wouldn't pay for itself. So each student had to contribute something to get that going.

Chao: Some of us started competing for the most economical eating. We managed for--I don't remember the exact figures--less than forty cents a day, then twenty-three cents a day. But after a while, two of us became sick and caught cold. [Laughter]

RL: What other extracurricular activities did you try?

Chao: I entered a couple of oratorical contests which I didn't win. One of the girls comforted me saying that it was all right, but she analyzed my speech to pieces [laughter] and made me feel better rather than worse.

RL: Were you very tense?

Chao: I was tense a few times, but on the whole, I was relaxed and enjoyed it.

RL: This is going ahead a little bit. You said that for four years, you didn't leave Cornell; and it wasn't until 1915 that you made your first visit to an American family. What did you do in vacations?

Chao: Of course, Cornell is a very scenic place, with beautiful places nearby; some even within walking distance if you stretch your walk a little, like Taughannock Falls--very scenic. Once we had a party walking; the round trip of the walk was twenty-three miles. Also Cayuga Lake is a very scenic place to row on.

RL: Did you feel yourself excluded from the American groups?

Chao: No, no. We felt that the Americans on the whole were very approachable. Sometimes they even went out of their way to talk to us.

RL: Was there any anti-Oriental, anti-Chinese prejudice?

Chao: Not that I noticed.

RL: Were you ever invited to professors' homes?

Chao: Yes, yes. We were sometimes invited to professors' homes. Sometimes also by organizations like some fraternities.

Somehow, I felt that Ithaca was enough of a world to move around in. [Laughter] There was enough activity around. Also, there was Beebe Lake and Watkins Glen and nearby places without traveling elsewhere. So I didn't go to New York city all those years I was in Cornell.

RL: Perhaps in one way that reduced the culture shock that many foreign students have felt in coming to another country; in a sense, you made Cornell your home for four years. Do you think that was part of it?

Chao: Apparently, I don't remember having any what you might call cultural shock. We studied about America before we came. In the Nanking days, I had an American teacher and was invited to his home, and had my first experience listening to piano music.

RL: After spending those years at Cornell, I was interested that instead of going to New York or the national capitol--Washington--your first trip was to the shredded wheat factory at Niagara Falls. [Laughter] How did that come about?

Chao: It was Niagara Falls that we wanted to visit. We just took in the usual sights. On those tours, whenever you visited Niagara Falls, you were taken to the shredded wheat factory. [Laughter]

RL: Before we move on to Harvard, is there anything else you'd like to say about your years at Cornell and your feelings about your student career and where you were going?

Chao: My memory of Cornell is so complex because of various periods I've been there--the first time for five years and again visiting there frequently for short periods, then half a year in more recent years. My memory, of course, was very much associated with the people I knew there, most of my teachers, a few of my fellow-students whose acquaintance I had kept up. It seems to be a natural place to go back to every once in a while.

World Events

RL: What impact did the news of the 1911 revolution have on you?

Chao: Of course, I was enormously interested in the 1911 revolution when I heard about it. Even before that, when we were students, in general, we were rather revolutionary-minded. All I wrote in my diary when war was declared in Europe was "What folly."

RL: After the 1911 revolution, how did you get news of China? It wasn't particularly well reported, I think, in the American press.

Chao: I don't remember any extended period during which I missed news from China. Shortly after that, I was able to receive word from relatives telling us that they were all right.

RL: Did you have political discussions with your relatives, or were they family letters?

Chao: Usually family letters; they weren't political.

RL: So how did you all get to learn of political events in China during the years that you were away?

Chao: I think we read both books and newspapers abroad, and we were able to get papers from China both before and after the revolution.

RL: Did you personally subscribe to Chinese newspapers?

Chao: Not all the time; we did subscribe to some of them. And, of course, the library had all the newspapers that were available.

RL: At Cornell?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Was World War I talked about much amongst students, or was it ignored? The 1914-1918 war was such a catastrophe for Europe; I know it had nothing like the same impact on America.

Chao: Not very much I don't think. They would talk about it occasionally. During my quarter spent at Chicago, in the fall of 1918, there was great excitement about the armistice. The first time, it was a false alarm, and then a few days passed before the real armistice came. There was celebration in the streets--flying ticker tapes and everything.

Harvard Years; 1915-1918, a Ph.D. in Philosophy

RL: When did you switch from mathematics to philosophy?

Chao: I made a switch in the fifth year at Cornell, but I didn't find it so much of a switch because I'd already taken courses in philosophy in undergraduate years. When I went to Harvard, I took history of science as a minor field. George Sarton was one of my teachers in

Chao: the history of science. In fact, I took two courses from him when I was the only student! In one seminar in the history of science, we met in a small study of his in the Widener Library where I just sat opposite him across a desk and he would lecture. I couldn't decide whether I should say "Yes" and nod, or just sit there silently like a student in any other class.

RL: What were the major problems--questions--that were exciting you or Sarton then in the field of history of science?

Chao: We covered mostly earlier periods, but we did touch on the recent advances in science. I think he was editing a journal on the history of science.

RL: How do you now appraise him as a scholar?

Chao: I would think that he was more a scholar than a scientist. He was very meticulous in his treatment of documentary material and didn't do as much as some other professors like [L.J.] Henderson of Harvard, who had more to do with the philosophy of science when he talked about the history of science.

RL: Then this goes back a little bit to the science journal. When you were at Harvard, it took you a hundred and thirty hours to write an article on Chinese-Occidental uranography.* Did you always record how long it took you to write things?

Chao: I usually make a record of the number of hours I do things every day and fractions of an hour down to the half hour.

RL: Really? If you spend ten minutes talking to the Internal Revenue gentlemen, do you enter that? [Laughter]

Chao: No, not ten minutes.

RL: Would you call a hundred and thirty hours a long time?

Chao: I think it's longer than usual.

RL: Would it include the research time?

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*"Jong-Shi Shingming Twukao," Science (Shanghai) III 1.42-52 and 3.270-308 (1917).

Chao: Yes, and drawing up the maps; that took a lot of time.

Another person I much enjoyed meeting was Ivor A. Richards. I was very impressed with his project for Basic English of which he was co-inventor with C.K. Ogden. He later went to teach at Tsing Hua University where I saw more of him. The first time I met him was at Harvard.

He was concerned very much with the philosophy of language as well as the practical handling of the language. I was interested enough in Basic English to have written a book in Chinese for teaching Basic English and spoke for a series of phonograph records for the Chung Hwa Book Company. I tried to speak with a non-American accent. That was in the early 1930s.*

RL: Did you feel that this was successful? Did this catch on in China?

Chao: There was a good deal of interest, but it wasn't taken too seriously. You can't find many things written in or about Basic English. But it did catch on in a way. There was a man, Hung Shen, who had a project for Basic Chinese using a limited number of words instead of a whole vocabulary.

RL: Could you briefly summarize what the principles were for Richards' and Ogden's Basic English?

Chao: The idea is just to choose a certain part of the total vocabulary so that you could say everything in this limited vocabulary without using the whole, so that it would be easier for children and foreigners to learn English. You can paraphrase certain words with a phrase using the small vocabulary, and you don't have to use an extra word. For example, there's no word "wife," a woman you're married to. (Actually one of the inventors, C.K. Ogden had no wife.) [Laughter]

RL: It would be very hard for English speaking people to learn to speak only Basic English.

Chao: Yes. They'd have to avoid certain words. But the way they count things, each word with various changes counts as one; for example, go-went-gone would be one word.

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*Basic English Records, Chung Hwa Book Co, Shanghai, 1934, with accompanying records.

RL: I remember meeting the Richards' in 1950 and found them particularly open and interesting people.

Chao: And they didn't talk in Basic English, either. [Laughter] He was really a person of wide interests and liberal views. He was a great walker; he took long hikes. He and Mrs. Richards had a serious accident driving, and they were crippled for quite sometime and still somewhat lame. But being mountain climbers, they could still climb mountains after that accident!

RL: What else would you like to say about your Harvard years and your professors in philosophy?

Chao: I enjoyed very much the seminar in metaphysics conduced by Josiah Royce; he was really very, very brilliant. Then, Professor [H.M.] Scheffer was really very meticulous; he was in charge of my thesis on "Continuity: A Study in Methodology," concerned with the question of the difference between a difference of degree and difference of kind, and when it's a difference of kind, is it also a difference of degree.

I remember at the defense of the thesis, at which Professor William Ernest Hocking was chairman, after they announced that I had passed the examination, Professor Hocking asked me, "Do you feel that writing on such a subject has had any effect on your life?" I said, "Certainly it didn't help me in my habits of indecision." [Laughter]

RL: You're so frank about your hesitations and depressions and so on that I wonder how you overcame these things. I also wondered whether you ever thought of psychiatric treatment?

Chao: Yes. Apparently in those days, I didn't know of the availability, if it was available in those days, of psychiatric treatment. My periods of depression were often associated with my chronic palpitation of the heart, and I went to my doctor about palpitation. My doctor did not specify anything; he really just told me to take things easy--which is hard to do. That symptom just wore off after years.

Five years ago it was (1969), I had a coronary attack, and there's no symptom of palpitation of the heart after the attack.

RL: That's a rather radical sort of cure!

Chao: Well, the palpitations disappeared ten or twenty years before the coronary attack. Then the feelings of depression also disappeared.

RL: Were you aware of the works of Freud at this time?

Chao: Yes, I'd read his work on wit and the unconscious. I remember that I thought that Freud was a good writer and explained things very clearly, but he himself apparently had no wit. [Laughter]

RL: How do you think that you worked your way through your problems? From the external observer's point of view, you were working very hard through all those years, except possibly briefly at Chicago. You were working productively, and yet subjectively you seemed to have considered yourself unsuccessful.

Chao: I suppose I was just in general an introvert and worried about things unnecessarily. Some things I tried to do and succeeded in doing; some things I didn't and was disappointed in myself.

RL: What would you say made these feelings wear off?

Chao: When I attributed my feelings to things, actually I think it was physiological--or should I say pathological. [Laughter]

In general I was interested in doing things in the most efficient way, spending the least amount of time and effort to achieve the same result. Sometimes I would make notes of special tricks for doing so.

RL: Were many of your student colleagues--Chinese or other--working on the same thing. Was this part of the times, or was this idiosyncratic to you?

Chao: I don't know if any of my fellow-students took correspondence courses like the one I took on personal efficiency; I probably saw that course announced in an ad. I made notes of various things about personal efficiency. For example, I made one note about Simultaneity of Compatible Operations. If you have to do things, and you can do things at the same time without conflict, then you can do two things at the same time.

RL: What did you find was compatible?

Chao: For example, buttoning up my coat buttons and closing the door after going out could be done at the same time. [Laughter]

Chicago and the University of California, Berkeley, 1918-1919

RL: When Harvard gave you the Sheldon Traveling fellowship, what did you decide to do?

Chao: First, I wandered about New England, mostly walking and visiting friends. I left for Chicago in September where I was supposed to be mainly studying history of science.

RL: Whom did you meet?

Chao: There was Berthold Laufer, of the Field Museum. He knew the Chinese field pretty well. He spoke English with some accent. It is so long ago, it's hard to recall. He showed me some very interesting old Chinese documents, some old editions and so on. I forgot who it was who introduced me to him.

RL: Was there much interest in Chicago at the time in his work? I know that the museum there has a magnificent collection.

Chao: Yes. He wasn't particularly connected with people in the university.

RL: Was this part of the museum popular and well-supported then, or did the big interest in Chinese art come later?

Chao: I think the big interest was later; that was in 1918 I was in Chicago. I was not too happy there. I caught the Spanish influenza, and in December I decided to move to Berkeley.

Things went much better in Berkeley. One of the people I enjoyed meeting was Alfred Kroeber. He was a very colorful person.

RL: In what sense colorful?

Chao: His style of speech--full of illustrations of what he was talking about. And his manner too.

RL: Did you discuss problems in linguistics with him? Was he at all interested at that time?

Chao: He was somewhat but not especially.

RL: We had hoped to interview Professor [George D.] Louderback in Geology. At one point he had said that he might write his own

RL: autobiography and then unfortunately he died before either project was accomplished. What can you tell me about him?

Chao: I have nothing serious to tell about him. I saw a bit of him when I was a visiting student and was allowed to eat at the Faculty Club where I met him. But years later, when I came to Berkeley and began to teach, at one of the faculty meetings he was sitting in the front row and I was in the back row. People around me couldn't hear and called "louder." Later, I said I should have said, "Louder back here; we can't hear you." [Laughter] But that was an afterthought. But I did note that I did succeed in making the pun at the moment when I was interviewed by Arthur Linkletter in a radio interview at the San Francisco World Fair. They asked me, "Dr. Chao, is there a movement to write the Chinese language with an alphabet?" I said, "Well, Mr. Linkletter, for twenty years I've been active in linking letters together, [laughter] to write the Chinese language."

RL: You're famous for your puns, and I'm very glad we have a few illustrations.

Chao: Of course, being in Berkeley, we were near the sceneries in the West. I took in the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and various places. In one of my visits to Yosemite, I walked up to the glacial point from that very narrow and steep trail--the ledge trail--(they call it the alleged trail). On top of that glacial point, there's a hanging rock; I climbed to the end of that rock to have my picture taken with my feet dangling two thousand feet above the valley. Since then, they've fenced it off so that people wouldn't fall off.

For ten years--when I first came to America, I saw ads about Yosemite, and I'd been calling it Yōse-mite for ten years before I came to the place and learned that it was called Yosemite.

III RETURN TO CHINA

Students and Universities in the '20s

RL: I'm glad that Professor Laurence Schneider has joined us for our interview today.

Chao: It's a pleasure for me.

RL: I don't think we talked earlier about why you decided to return to Cornell to teach physics after one year of your Sheldon traveling fellowship instead of taking another year of the Sheldon or accepting the offers from Chinese universities that you received at this point.

Chao: Of course, I was always a faithful alumnus of Cornell. My interests, as I was saying, shifted from one thing to another, and at that moment, I was probably more attracted to physics, in which I had taken as many courses as I did in mathematics, in which I was nominally a major. So I saw this as a good opportunity to do some more physics. Those were also the days of applied physics in the way of wireless telephony and so forth.

Schneider: I take it that Cornell was an outstanding campus for physics of the sort you were interested in.

Chao: Yes, yes.

RL: When you and other western-trained Chinese started returning to China in the 1920s, what was the situation of such returned scholars?

Chao: Since there were so many calls for modern trained young men, it was usually very easy to get jobs. Tsing Hua being the place under whose auspices many of the students were sent out, I thought it would be nice to go back there with many people I knew.

RL: I think this is more your subject, Larry. You were talking to me about the divisions that developed between some of the people who had been to different American institutions.

Schneider: To what degree did you sense a growing division amongst the students overseas, let's say at Cornell or Columbia? Did they choose specific American institutions or professors to work with on the basis of preconceived notions of what they wanted for China, or did it perhaps work the other way?

Chao: I don't think so; I didn't notice any choice in that respect. At each institution, there were different lines of thought about these things. It was more on the basis of the individual choice of professors, or sometime we saw it more in terms of course content when we'd look at a catalogue before we knew about the university. It's somewhat different from the situation in, say, Germany, where a student follows specifically some professor.

Schneider: When you were studying in the United States during those Cornell years, were you aware of any divisions growing between, let's say, those students who eventually went on to study at Columbia and those who eventually went on to study at Harvard?

Chao: Not that I noticed. Very often, it was for purely personal or accidental reasons that they went to one or the other. But the majority of them, of course, went to the institutions in the eastern part of this country.

Schneider: Did you know Mei Kuang-ti during this period?

Chao: Yes. I knew him at Harvard [1915-1918]. After I returned to China, in the middle '20s, I was asked to get somebody to continue with my courses in Chinese; I recommended Mei Kuang-ti, although he was anti pai-hua [vernacular] and I was for pai-hua, because I knew he was a thoroughly well trained scholar. I'd known him as a student too, yes.

Schneider: Had he formed these opinions in his student days against the use of pai-hua?

Chao: Maybe before he came to this country; he was classically trained. Of course, all of us were classically trained, of our age. I think I noted that in my diary in the early days at Cornell in which I wrote in classical Chinese; everybody wrote in classical Chinese, even sometime after Hu Shih's 1917 Literary Revolution. I wrote in my diary things like jyh shiahjenn cheu muhjinq which meant, "Went downtown to get eyeglasses." We wouldn't think of writing in the colloquial. Even in the very first article that Hu Shih wrote in the Hsin ch'ing-nien [New Youth] Magazine advocating the use of colloquial, he wrote that article in the classical language.

Schneider: When did you start using pai-hua in your diary?

Chao: I don't think I ever did. After I wrote it in wen yen for a while, then I shifted over to English. I recent years--in the last three or four decades--I've been writing my diary in English with a summary in Chinese. Of course, in the summary you can't tell whether it's in pai-hua or not--it's a very brief summary.

Schneider: Do you think that, in regard to this important question of language reform, that people like Mei Kuang-ti, who continued to favor the use of wen yen, that their attitudes were reinforced by their work at Harvard with Professor [Irving] Babbitt. Did you know Professor Babbitt?

Chao: Not very well, no.

Schneider: Mei Kuang-Ti writes a great deal about his respect for Babbitt. I wonder if the experience of Chinese students in the United States was visibly altered for a person like yourself in one direction or another--whether reinforced or perhaps turned in another direction?

Chao: I'm not sure. The one thing that was rather mutual in this respect was that, in English, when you write, you can't very well tell whether it's wen yen or pai-hua. As to the school of thought about literary work, literary training, there are sometimes people who work on a thesis on the subject of the classical language, but the thesis itself would be written in the colloquial.

Our feeling was that all English writing, except the very abstruse, sounded more like pai-hua which is nearer to ordinary

Chao: speech, at least expository English; it sounds more like speech than the ancient classical language.

RL: Would you say, then, that although this was perhaps the crucial question, at least in your field, in the modernization of China, that it didn't provoke intense personal disputes amongst scholars of your generation, so that perhaps some of the factionalism about which we read has been exaggerated?

Chao: What, for example?

Schneider: For example, Hu Shih's debates with Mei Kuang-ti and Mei Kuang-ti's friends at Southeastern University [Tung-nan ta-hsüeh]--when read in retrospect, they're rather heated and give the impression of severe conflict; and yet, as you've suggested, these men, in fact, had a great deal in common.

Chao: Yes, that's true.

Schneider: Were you ever in the company of Hu Shih and Mei Kuang-ti in the United States? Did Mei Kuang-ti go to Cornell at one time?

Chao: I don't think he studied there.

Schneider: He studied at Harvard only. I was curious to know whether in the United States there was an opportunity for leaders of cultural reform--literary, language reform movements--to get together, to debate and speak together and discuss these kinds of questions before they got back to China?

Chao: There were frequent Chinese Student Alliance meetings from various institutions, meeting in one institution or another. During those meetings, there would be discussions along these lines.

Schneider: May I ask you just briefly about that, because I'm not familiar with that institution.

Chao: Yes. There was a Chinese Students Alliance Eastern Division, including the Middle West, and Western Division. The Eastern and Middle West divisions were more active than the Western Division; they sometimes had joint annual conferences lasting a week or so, sometimes at Cornell or Harvard, sometimes at smaller colleges. They preferred the smaller places because they could keep people together; in a larger place, they would scatter and see sights. [Laughter]

Chao: There were papers read and discussions and athletic meets.

RL: In which Mr. Chao was very successful.

Schneider: The mile walk, I remember. [Laughter] Let's see--you did it in ten minutes, four seconds.

Chao: Something like that. The world's record was under nine minutes.

Schneider: Did the student alliance have any publications?

Chao: There was the Chinese Students Monthly, at one time edited by T.V. Soong. I wrote some articles on the reform of the Chinese language in the Chinese Students Alliance.

Schneider: This would have been about what time?

Chao: In the late 1910s I would say; I can't recall exactly.

Schneider: And this was published in English, was it?

Chao: Yes. About that time, we organized the Chinese Science Society--1915 it started at Cornell. After three or four years, the Society as well as the monthly was moved to Shanghai, and I remained behind as the American editor.

Schneider: Was there some relationship between the science society and the student alliance?

Chao: No; they were separate.

Schneider: It would be very interesting to see some of the old publications.

Chao: I still have volumes one, two, three, four of what we call Science, all written in Chinese, of course. Also, those articles were written in the classical language, not in pai-hua, in the early years.

Schneider: Did you write on the subject of language in Science?

Chao: Usually about scientific things. One of them was Chinese-Occidental Uranography. Hu Shih wrote one of the earliest articles on modern scientific punctuation in Science. It's one of the few things, besides my diary, that I saved after World War II.

Schneider: This publication, though, from your memoirs, did have some rather wide circulation in Shanghai, so that it might be accessible to us.

Chao: Yes, I think some libraries would have that.

RL: To return to the situation in the twenties, when you went back to China, you said that people had no difficulty getting jobs because there were relatively few of you with western training. But what sort of attitudes did you run into in the established faculties from, say, Chinese professors who had not been abroad?

Chao: I think most of those who taught scientific subjects were those who had been abroad, or at least who had been to Japan, because in the early years there were many more Japan-returned students than western-returned students. But those who taught the regular classical Chinese subjects may not have been abroad. There was no special antagonism or jealousy among the groups.

RL: What about the students? Did they prefer to study with people who had been trained abroad?

Chao: It depended upon the subject they were taking. There were certain required subjects.

Schneider: Do you feel--whatever subject the returned student was teaching--that he was treated in any special way?

Chao: Not that I noticed in that respect.

RL: Did you notice any major differences between people who were trained in Japan compared to those who trained either in America or in England or continental Europe?

Chao: I think people, on the whole, thought more highly of people who were trained in the West than those who were trained in Japan. One reason is that Japan is so near and so easy, so accessible that more people went; on the whole, the level of accomplishment of those who had studied there may not come up to those who had to prepare long years and went far. Also, there was less of a language problem in going to Japan because the Chinese who studied in Japan practically read all Japanese in Chinese, the most important words were in Kanji. They not only read them as Chinese; they also pronounced them in Chinese rather than in the Japanese on reading even. I think the stock example I gave was a sentence, for example, in Japanese 今日は良い天氣です, Kyō wa yoi tenki desu. "Today is fine

Chao: weather." Because in characters, kyō is written 今日 and yoi is written 良い. Most Chinese, even those who had studied in Japan, would read the sentence as: Chīnjih wa liáng-ì t'iēnch'ì desu, [laughter]; just those articles were written in Japanese--everything else was pronounced in Chinese. That's the way they always read their textbooks they used in Japan.

RL: Would you comment on the differences that developed between the northern and southern Chinese universities?

Chao: I don't think there is a difference, as such, between northern and southern schools. There's some difference of tradition between the missionary schools and the government schools and the private schools. Yenching was a missionary school, and Tsing Hua was very much Americanized because of the American origin of the funds of the returned Boxer Indemnity, on the basis of which Tsing Hua was established.

National Peking University was, of course, a regular government institution inherited from the previous old Peking University. The Nanking University--later called Central University--was a government university. Chung Shan University in Canton was named after Sun Yat-sen, Chung Shan. Soochow University was a missionary school. And of course, in Shanghai, St. John's University was a very prominent missionary university.

I think the recruitment of teachers and of students was rather non-denominational, I would say. All kinds of teachers and students went on the whole, I think, on the basis of merit.

Schneider: You say that as such, there was no northern and southern division. Let me be more specific. You were offered a position, I believe, by President Kuo Ping-wen of Tung Nan; at that time, I wonder, was there a sense of difference between Peking University and Tung Nan [Southeastern] University?

Chao: Peking University I think had always had higher prestige.

Schneider: Justifiably, do you think?

Chao: I think so; there are more scholars teaching there.

Schneider: Do you find it ironic that at Tung Nan University, we find a rather eloquent group of people who opposed literary and language reform, to one degree or another; Peking University,

Schneider: of course, was the home of literary reform. And yet, if I'm not mistaken, at Tung Nan University, the sciences had their first major development as academic departments.

Chao: Yes, they're very good in science.

Schneider: Is this a contradiction at all, the fact that modern science is accepted on the same campus where literary reform is rejected?

Chao: Apparently people didn't notice any such possible contradiction. Science, as I was saying, was written in the classical language.

Schneider: So the language per se was not an inhibition to the acceptance of science. Was there any kind of resistance to putting modern American styles of scientific academics into the university system, anything similar to resistance to any other kinds of cultural reform?

Chao: As far as I remember, there's never been any opposition to the introduction of science in any institution, even though culturally some of the institutions were rather more old fashioned than others.

Schneider: To come back to this question of Peking University as opposed to Tung Nan University, did you have any perceptions at all that a student of certain kinds of political interest or certain kinds of social reform interest might choose one as opposed to the other, or really had it been leveled out by the time you returned between Peking and Nanking?

Chao: I was certainly not observant myself about these things when I was there. As to the use of language in studying and teaching, even in the Peking University, people still used much of the classical language.

Schneider: They did? So they didn't practice all that they preached!

Chao: No. As I said, Hu Shih advocated the revolution in the language by writing in the old style; that first started in 1917.

RL: Perhaps it was hard to make the switch for many people.

Chao: Yes. Except for reading novels like Dream of the Red Chamber, people weren't in the habit of writing as one would speak.

Schneider: This would have persisted into the twenties?

Chao: Yes. Very much so. Of course, nowadays, even today, when I returned in 1973, I noticed that when they make up new terms, they're still thinking mostly in terms of the classical Chinese; some of them were made up which didn't necessarily sound--didn't have as much carrying power as if they had used more colloquial morphemes. Every Chinese syllable is more or less a morpheme; if you have two of them together, the parts themselves are not free words, and they often have a lot of sibilant sounds. Those who made them up were thinking in terms of the classical language rather than thinking of the way they are used in everyday speech.

RL: That's an interesting comment on cultural and linguistic persistence. Think how long it is now since the first language revolution.

Chao: Yes--1917 to 1973.

RL: Did you perceive any political influence on either students' or professors' choice of science or the humanities--classics? After all, this was a major debate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. How much actual effect was it having on professional choices in the twenties in China?

Chao: I don't think there was much effect, or maybe I wasn't observant enough to notice if there was any effect on the matter of choice. Of course, in the natural sciences there were more openings for jobs.

Schneider: Did you find that to be involved in the sciences as they were developing at that time in China didn't necessarily exclude one from interest in what is broadly called cultural matters? I raise the question because apparently in your own work you were involved in formal sciences as well as in language concerns, which was the heart of the so-called cultural movement. Were you unique in that kind of interest?

Chao: I think I was rather, myself, undecided what exactly I wanted to do most. Even if I did go into studies of the humanities, my approach was probably more that of science than that of culture. I was interested in recording dialects as they were spoken. I did join some movements in reform of the language--that is, in unifying the language, promoting Mandarin. But

Chao: at the time I was doing that, I was more interested in finding out how things were than advocating how things should be. That's why in later years, I spent so many years going to various places recording dialects as they were actually spoken.

RL: When you were younger, you describe yourself as a revolutionary, and you said everybody was revolutionary.

Chao: Yes. It was rather anti-Manchu, anti-dynasty in that sense.

RL: At this point, would you describe yourself as interested in reform, but not a revolutionary?

Chao: Yes. I was in sympathy with all kinds of reforms, and we were revolutionary in the sense that we were opposed to the Manchu Dynasty.

Schneider: But once the revolution--understood as eliminating the Manchus--once that was over, what did you feel? A feeling of great accomplishment? Emptiness? New goals?

Chao: It was felt to be a success. I was in America at the time when it happened. One fellow student at Cornell said, "Good news! Good news!" That was the 1911 revolution, and we all thought that was what we had hoped had happened.

Schneider: Later, when you were making decisions about which course of academics to follow--and of course you talked about these things with fellow-students--I wonder to what degree questions of national obligation entered into your decision making.

Chao: I think very little. We thought that with so many of us, probably our different interests would cover most of the needs. [Laughter] As for myself, I was just self-centered; I just followed the interests I had.

Schneider: What about your interest in language?

Chao: That started very early because of the early language experience I had. My people came from what we call the South, which means the Kiangsu, Chekiang region--the Wu dialect region. My grandfather spoke Mandarin very poorly, and so did my father. I think my mother was the only one who spoke a fairly good Mandarin. At home, we children always spoke Mandarin.

Chao: Then, as soon as we started to learn to read and write, we were taught the Changchow pronunciation in the Wu dialect, so that at one time I could only speak in the northern dialect and read in the southern. Moving about, even within what's now called Hopeh province, we were exposed to various kinds of accents. When we went back to Changchow later, we were exposed to even more varieties of dialect. That's how I got interested in all these different matters of pronunciation and matters of vocabulary among different dialects.

With Bertrand Russell and Dora Black, 1920-1921

RL: Would you tell us about your year as interpreter for Bertrand Russell? Although Mr. Chao is mentioned in Russell's autobiography,* I think there is much more about it that readers would like to know. Larry, did you know that Mr. Chao actually lived in the same house that year with Bertrand Russell?

Schneider: No, I didn't.

Chao: Last year I found the same house and took a picture of it. The inscription on the front gate is still the same.

RL: You mentioned earlier, I believe, that Liang Ch'i-ch'ao was the man chiefly responsible for the invitation to Russell to lecture in China. Perhaps you could tell us about how Russell's visit was arranged.

Chao: We formed a sort of lecture society under whose auspices we invited Bertrand Russell. He came together with Dora Black and stayed in that house I was mentioning in Peking. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao was a leader of the so-called Progressive Party, and so people warned me not to be too much influenced by them for political purposes. All I did was visit to try to interpret Russell.

RL: What were your friends afraid of?

Chao: They just wanted to promote the prestige of the party because they invited some prominent intellectual from abroad.

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*Bertrand Russell, The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 3 vols., Allen and Unwin, London, 1967.

Schneider: What did the Progressive Party signify to your friends that apparently they did not agree with?

Chao: I think it was--the Progressive Party was at that time still not for the Kuomintang. Those friends who were not in favor of that were afraid that they would have too much influence over the Kuomintang, which was in the early days of its development in the country.

RL: Did you yourself have a party affiliation at this time?

Chao: No, I didn't belong to any party; I've never belonged to any party. I'm not a member of Kuomintang or of Kungch'antang or any tang. I considered myself a modernist.

RL: Can you tell us about how you first met Bertrand Russell and Dora Black and your impressions of them?

Chao: I was impressed by the fact that they were much more approachable than I expected from what I had read about them or from looking at their pictures. Bertrand Russell looked younger than I thought he'd be; he was forty-nine when he came to China.

RL: Had you been nervous about the assignment, then?

Chao: Not especially. I had been reading him, of course, a lot, his Principles of Mathematics, and tried to read his Principia Mathematica, which wasn't meant to be read [laughter], his opus magnum.

RL: Had you done previous translation on a sustained basis?

Chao: Off and on; not very often. This was the first time I did any oral translation in a regular program.

RL: How did you do it? How long did Russell speak?

Chao: Usually a paragraph at a time.

RL: Did you practice this before the lecture tour started?

Chao: No. In some of the lectures, he showed me his outline; in most cases, it was just at the moment.

Schneider: So he did extemporize?

Chao: Yes, he extemporized all the time; he didn't read from notes. He had notes, but it wasn't in the form of connected sentences.

RL: What were the major subjects that he covered on this Chinese tour?

Chao: Problems of philosophy and then a few lectures on social problems. Then we formed a Russell Society discussing his philosophy; he came to that sometimes for informal talks.

Schneider: Was the society formed before he came?

Chao: After he came.

RL: Who were some of the other members of this society?

Chao: There were Fu T'ung, one of the sponsors for his coming; Ch'ü Shih-ying, he was editor of a daily in Peking; and then, of course, members of the lecture society--Chiang Po-li.

RL: Both you and Bertrand Russell like to make puns. Did you feel an immediate affinity with him? [Laughter]

Chao: From reading him I already knew this. One of the puns he made he attributed to me. Actually, one of his few lectures on social problems was "Causes of the Present Chaos in China." After he went back to England and we were married, we wrote to him about the birth of a child, he says, "Congratulations! Now you are among the causes of the present Chaos in China." [Laughter] That was <u>his</u> pun, but he attributed it to me in his autobiography, saying that I like to make puns (which I do admit), but when he cited an example, he cited his own. [Laughter]

Schneider: Had you developed some affinity for Russell's ideas about which way modern civilization should go, and particularly what direction China should take? Even before he arrived, were you aware of the kinds of things he might be saying to the Chinese, the kinds of advice he might be giving?

Chao: He talked so little about things political; I can't even remember. On the whole, he was all for liberalism, including freedom of speech, which wasn't very free in China at that time. Because Chiang Monlin and Hu Shih and so forth were influential people, though somewhat radical-minded from the point of view of the authorities, they didn't quite touch them.

Chao: Doing things out of the way, such as running a birth control clinic by my wife, which was against the law, was also just blinked at.

Schneider: What kinds of things did Russell talk about?

Chao: In his general speeches, he told us about how things were in England, and he wasn't approving everything that was going on in England; on the whole, he was for greater liberalism and freedom.

Schneider: Did he have any specific advice to give to the Chinese about what they should do?

Chao: Not that I remember.

RL: How was he received? Did he have large audiences?

Chao: Yes. Sometimes there were over-flowing audiences, and since there was no adequate acoustic equipment in those days, some had to be turned away. At some of the public lectures, there were fifteen hundred to two thousand--more than the hall could hold. Radical-minded as he was, he was rather conservative about everyday habits, such as taking off your overcoat when you lecture in a hall. Once, traveling to Paoting, a short distance (about a hundred miles south of Peking), he lectured in an unheated hall with no overcoat on; that was how he contracted that dangerous pneumonia when he came back to Peking. He almost died from that.

Because he hadn't been married yet to Dora Black, we thought it wise to ask him to write his will to transfer the rights to her; he was barely able to sign. He recovered, but the London newspaper was misinformed and reported his death. When hearing about this, he said, "Tell them that the report of my death was very much exaggerated." [Laughter]

RL: Did you have any technical problems in translating his philosophical lectures in a way that would be understood by the sorts of audiences you had, which I assume were mixed?

Chao: Yes. I did have to consult him, consult others about the translation of certain terms. Also, I've been criticized for not using the traditional terms for some of the things. In those days, some of those were really still in a fluid state and there was no established usage for certain things.

RL: Did you ever have the opportunity to use blackboards so that you could use characters?

Chao: Yes. Sometimes we used a blackboard.

RL: Was this a helpful thing?

Chao: Yes.

RL: My mind boggles at the problem of--well, translating Russell from the printed page into my own head is enough of a problem, but to translate without having seen the text of his talk in the fluid stage of the Chinese language at that point seems to me a tremendous task.

Chao: They started a Russell Monthly in Chinese for a while.

Schneider: What was there about his thought, or what aspect of his thought was so appealing do you think? What made him so popular so quickly?

Chao: I think one thing was that he was rather new, different from the lines of other lecturers who had been there. John Dewey was there about the same time, and usually it was Hu Shih who translated John Dewey.

On one occasion, Hu Shih was occupied with something else, and I had to translate Dewey. He would say, "We should have talks and conferences and consultations," and I would have to find three near synonyms in Chinese [laughter] to translate his rather diffuse style.

Schneider: Did he insist on this?

Chao: No, he didn't insist but I tried to approximate him. [Laughter]

Schneider: I take it his style was a little more difficult to deal with than Russell's. I've heard that at Columbia in English, he was difficult to follow. What about the reception of Dewey compared with Russell? Were there different reactions to them, did you perceive?

Chao: I think there was a more popular appeal in Dewey's talks than in Russell's, whereas Russell appealed to special kinds of audiences, although many branches, too.

Schneider: How would you characterize the more specialized Russell audience?

Chao: Those with interest in science, mathematics, and philosophy, and also those interested in his revolutionary social ideas.

Schneider: Of those revolutionary social ideas, which do you recall as being more interesting to those Chinese audiences, and yourself as well?

Chao: I suppose it was his advocacy of some sort of socialism. Soon after he left China, however, and visited Russia, he was disappointed with the system there.

Schneider: Were his Chinese admirers aware of his disappointment afterwards?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: Did that affect their own feelings about Russell?

Chao: Apparently not, no.

Schneider: Do you think that his disenchantment with socialism may have affected some numbers of Chinese in their attitudes toward evaluating socialism?

Chao: Probably. That was so long ago, and people don't read him so much nowadays. Probably not very much.

Schneider: I meant, of course, back then, in the twenties, when Chinese intellectuals were making their own decisions. Were you yourself aware of his disenchantment when it occurred?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: How was it conveyed to you? I really don't recall where he first published his attitudes about these things. Was there an opportunity to keep up with his published thought?

Chao: More or less.

RL: Were you aware of Chinese communists attending these lectures, or were they so much hidden that you didn't know about them?

Chao: I don't recall specific names. One incident I recall about his lecture in Changsha and Hunan, after his arrival. I had

Chao: learned some smattering of Hunanese on the boat trip from Shanghai to Changsha with him. After the lecture, a student came up and asked me, "Dr. Chao, what county of Hunan do you come from?" not realizing that I was a speaker of Mandarin speaking Hunanese badly; he thought I was a Hunanese speaking Mandarin badly. [Laughter] Somebody speculated at that time that the student who asked me that might have been Mao Tse-tung. [Laughter]

RL: Perhaps at this point I could ask you if any of your friends or acquaintances were communists?

Chao: I can't think of any names specifically.

RL: You described the sorts of people whom you thought were attracted to Russell's lectures. How would you describe the sorts of people who were attracted to Dewey's lectures?

Chao: I suppose everybody was. He had a much broader appeal.

Schneider: Did you yourself have some feelings about Dewey or Russell in preference of one to the other?

Chao: Russell's subjects were more interesting to me.

Schneider: What about the relative merits of their social commentaries? Did you find one or the other more appealing or distasteful?

Chao: It didn't seem to make very much difference to me. I was rather a back number about social problems.

Schneider: Did Russell discuss his views on things, such as marriage, the family, by way of either example or advice to modern China?

Chao: I think he did. I've forgotten most of what he did advocate. Of course, he was all in favor of the then developing system of what we call free marriage--marriage by free choice instead of marriage arranged by families (which was disappearing in those days).

In Dora Black's lectures, she mentioned the problems in marriage. At one of her lectures she mentioned "those young men and women who are not married." Since "to marry" in Chinese takes a different word whether it's a man or a woman,

Chao: I had to translate by different verbs. But I twisted them around using the wrong verb and came out with something which would sound like, "those young men who have no husbands and those young women with no wives," and the audience, of course, roared with laughter. When Miss Black asked me what they were laughing about, I told her, [whispered] "It'll take too long to explain; I'll have to explain to you afterwards." [Laughter] Ch'ü is the verb literally "to take," to marry by a man, and chia, literally "to go to home," is a verb to marry on the part of a woman.

RL: I didn't realize that you translated for Dora Black as well.

Chao: Yes, I did.

RL: Apart from free love, or free marriage--perhaps both--what other subjects did she talk about, and to whom did she appeal?

Chao: She had a good audience usually. She talked about social problems.

Schneider: Were there men as well as women in the audience of Dora Black?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: Did she have the same itinerary as Bertrand Russell, which is to say did she speak on most of the occasions at the same places he spoke?

Chao: No, they had different programs.

Schneider: Is there some record of her speeches to your knowledge.

Chao: There must be; I don't know where to look.

Schneider: What was the practice? You yourself would translate freely, right on the spot, but was someone assigned to take notes?

Chao: Yes, someone would take notes and I would edit them.

RL: Then were they published in a newspaper?

Chao: Yes, sometimes a newspaper. There was a Russell Monthly.

Schneider: So you think that her speeches might be in that Russell Monthly?

Chao: Yes.

RL: By example, Bertrand Russell and Dora Black were setting a social pattern which, of course, was uncommon (to put it mildly) in England, let alone in China. It wasn't customary at that time for an unmarried couple to travel around, and I gather that Miss Black's pregnancy became quite perceptible when she was in China. You could see that she was pregnant, couldn't you?

Chao: Yes.

RL: What sort of problems arose from this with either Chinese or European society?

Chao: Apparently, in those days things were changing so fast and even marriage by free choice was so radical, that they didn't notice such a great difference between them and our way--marriage by free choice. So, people didn't talk very much about it.

Schneider: Was there any attempt on the part of government or any organization to prevent Russell and Dora Black from speaking?

Chao: No, not that I know of.

Schneider: Do you recall any negative reactions on the part of newspapers or social commentators?

Chao: Not that I can recall.

RL: Did they have much contact with the foreign community of Peking?

Chao: They had some contacts with English people and Americans. There was E.S. Bennett of the British legation who used to go to Russell's lectures. Of course, when he was sick, he was in a German hospital and they were all talking German.

RL: You lived in the same house with them. Who were their guests or visitors?

Chao: Mostly the sponsors of the lectures, like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Fu T'ung and Ch'ü Shih-ying.

RL: So that they would be predominantly members of the Chinese intelligentsia.

Chao: Yes. There were a couple of foreign visitors; I don't remember their names.

Schneider: Was it necessary for you to interpret for people like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao?

Chao: Yes, I had to interpret the conversation.

Schneider: What kinds of things would a man like Liang Ch'i-ch'ao have been interested in discussing with Russell?

Chao: He would talk mostly about things social and political.

Schneider: They seemed to agree, did they?

Chao: I didn't seem to notice any great differences, or maybe Liang was diplomatic enough not to show this.

RL: How well informed was Bertrand Russell about China before he came on this trip?

Chao: He knew fairly well how things were going in China.

RL: What sorts of things do you think he learned from his year there, and did his opinions shift as a result of this experience?

Chao: On the whole, he had a better opinion of the Chinese after he had met the people at close range. He felt the Chinese were better informed than he thought they might be and not so conservative as he was afraid they might be.

Academia Sinica and Harvard Yenching

RL: What differences did you notice between the scholars at Academia Sinica and Harvard Yenching in China?

Chao: I think they were people with more Chinese background than those from Harvard Yenching.

Schneider: Academia Sinica?

Chao: Yes, that's right.

Schneider: By Chinese background, do you mean classical training?

Chao: Not necessarily classical training but those who had been in China longer.

RL: So it was a chronological as well as an interest difference; the older people went somewhat to Academia Sinica?

Chao: Yes. It was an institution for research only; there were no courses taught, no classes.

Schneider: Was this true of both the institutes at that time--Academia Sinica as well as Harvard Yenching?

Chao: Harvard Yenching had courses. They were Harvard courses, but both the director and the nominal head were professors at Harvard, so Harvard Yenching Institute in China was practically a sideline activity of the department [in Cambridge], although it was separately supported and given a separate name.

RL: Were these graduate or undergraduate courses at Harvard Yenching?

Chao: Both.

Schneider: Was there any kind of friendly rivalry between the research branches of Academia Sinica and Harvard Yenching?

Chao: What kind of friendly rivalry?

Schneider: In the sense of schools of scholarship espousing one approach to teaching or to literary forms as opposed to another. Or, in the realm of historical research--

Chao: Of course, in the case of Mei Kuang-ti, he was classically-oriented.

Schneider: When you joined Academia Sinica, where was he?

Chao: He was at Harvard.

Schneider: Let me give you a specific instance to show you the kind of thing I mean. Ku Chieh-kang, whom you may know, an historian of some note in the late twenties and thirties--

Chao: He was at Amoy.

Schneider: He was at Amoy, too, yes. Apparently he chose to do his historical research at Harvard Yenching as opposed to Academia Sinica. Apparently Fu Ssu-nien invited him to join Academia Sinica. I've always wondered why he would have chosen one as opposed to the other, and what resulted from his having stayed with Harvard Yenching, whether Harvard Yenching developed a kind of style--you know, universities have styles about them. Do you have some feelings about why a scholar of his prominence might have made that choice?

Chao: I would think that was accidental, maybe because of his wanderlust--he wanted to be abroad for a while.

Schneider: Of course, Harvard Yenching did operate in the Peking area as well as overseas, so that if one chose to work in the Peking branch of Harvard Yenching as opposed to Academia Sinica--where was Academia Sinica located?

Chao: For a while, the Institute of History and Philology was in Peking and the sciences were in Shanghai. Then, in the early thirties, everything was moved to Nanking. Not everything--history and philology were moved to Nanking and I think meteorology also, and the science institutes were still in Shanghai.

I was both in the Peking time and in the Nanking time, in the late twenties and Shanghai in the early thirties. In the late twenties, I was teaching at Tsing Hua and then I shifted to Academia Sinica and taught a couple of hours commuting to Tsing Hua every week.

Schneider: That wasn't unusual, I take it; many scholars divided themselves up.

Chao: Yes, there were some others, but it was not very common. By that time there were buses between Tsing Hua and Peking, which made things more convenient.

Tsing Hua

RL: Perhaps we could at this point discuss Tsing Hua chronologically. You mentioned the transportation. I think when you first went there in 1920 it was very hard to get to Peking. How far was it actually?

Chao: I don't remember in terms of miles, but it was two hours by rickshaw. By bus it was twenty minutes from Tsing Hua to the YMCA on Morrison Street (Wang-fu Ching Ta Chieh) in northeastern Peking.

RL: You told us that you chose to teach at Tsing Hua primarily because it was the place which organized the Boxer Indemnity students. The funding, then, was basically American, in the sense of the returned indemnity?

Chao: Yes, that's right.

RL: I've had an advantage over Larry in reading your autobiography. I note that you had an extraordinary roster of distinguished colleagues when you first went to Tsing Hua in 1920--Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, Wang Kuo-wei, and Yin-k'o ch'en [Yinko Tschen]. Can you talk about those people as people?

Chao: That was in 1925, not the first time I taught at Tsing Hua in 1920.

Liang Ch'i-ch'ao we met rather late, although we had studied his Hsin-Min Ts'ung-Pao one of the earliest periodicals he started in the 1900s; we heard much about him. He was a monarchist; he was originally in favor of continuing the monarchy.

He was an excellent lecturer, although he spoke with a heavy Cantonese accent. He was also among those interested in inviting Bertrand Russell to lecture in China. He was one of the research professors who gave lectures to advanced students.

Ch'en Yin-k'o we met first when he was a student in Germany in the early 1920s. Later, he was invited to go to Tsing Hua as one of the four research professors. He wasn't married then; in fact, we stayed next door to his house in Tsing Hua, one of the faculty residences. I had too many things, and he wasn't married; so we shared the two houses and he let us use some of his rooms next door. He said he wasn't interested in going to

Chao: America when he was asked to. He said the only attraction to going to America was to eat lobster at Joy Hong Low on Tyler Street in Boston. [Laughter] He studied at Harvard briefly.

Wang Kuo-wei, of course, was a great classical scholar who was more or less loyal--at least sympathetic--with the dynasty. When the revolutionary army came, he jumped into the lake and killed himself.

Schneider: Did you know him at all well before he committed suicide?

Chao: No. Well, I knew him as a colleague but not before.

Schneider: I wonder what kind of teacher he was.

Chao: He was a quiet person. He spoke lectures rather systematically, not colorfully. A very quiet person. His writing was also very meticulous. A first-rate scholar.

Schneider: What kind of an atmosphere was there in the school at that time? Do you feel one could look at the way people dressed and the way they met with one another and tell that this was a place where modern scholars were meeting, or was it still the old, traditional academy?

Chao: There were a few traditional-minded old timers there, but on the whole, it was more or less a modern styled institution. Of course, that Tsing Hua Research Institute was a small part of the whole institution. On the whole, in 1925, it was changed from a preparatory college for going to America into a regular university, just like any other university.

Students who graduated there didn't necessarily go abroad; they studied in various branches. There was the college of engineering, of course, but arts and sciences was the main part of the university.

RL: About how large was the student body at this point?

Chao: I can't tell you now. I would say under a thousand; not as large as Peking University.

RL: And were the students fee-paying largely or supported by scholarships?

Chao: Some were supported by scholarships; some paid rather a nominal sum (I don't remember the amount).

RL: Where did the students of Tsing Hua come from? Were they local, largely from the Peking area?

Chao: No. They were from all parts of the country.

RL: Did they know a foreign language before they came there?

Chao: They usually had studied English for two or three years in high school.

RL: Was it a requirement for them?

Chao: Yes, I think it was required for the entrance examination.

RL: Was all the teaching in Chinese?

Chao: Except, of course, in English, because they had English-speaking teachers as well as Chinese.

RL: Were the students when they entered competent to work in English? Did they understand the lectures and reading adequately?

Chao: Yes. Of course it was an effort.

RL: For the faculty, was their pay adequate or did they have to moonlight or take other jobs?

Chao: Most of them didn't, as I recall; apparently the pay was enough. For the research professors, the pay was rather higher than the average; I don't remember what the amount was.

RL: Was it paid regularly or did you have trouble?

Chao: No, we didn't have trouble, as Peking University had for sometime.

Schneider: Their problem was what--the government?

Chao: Government, yes; a lot of things were in arrears. You can see all the changes in government from the old War Lords time through the nationalist revolution in the late twenties, a change of administration.

RL: How was the faculty set up? Was it run like an American university on the department system or more like a continental

RL: university with one person--the Professor--having a lot of power?

Chao: It's more in the American fashion, excepting the research institute; then sometimes the research student was assigned specifically to one specific research professor. In the university at large, any student could take any professor's course.

RL: Administrators always have problems, I suppose, particularly in times of unrest. Can you talk at all of the problems of administration at Tsing Hua at this period?

Chao: There was a question of--there was a special government committee which met at the president's office on various problems, but on the whole, the president was supposed to have the final say about decisions; it was really a sort of advisory committee.

RL: Was this like our academic senate?

Chao: Probably--a small body of less than ten people.

RL: It was primarily advisory?

Chao: Yes, although it most cases, the president would follow what was recommended by the group.

RL: Did classes follow the American pattern?

Chao: I think we more or less followed the American traditional plan of instruction periods and examinations. There would be what we called small examinations between terms and final examinations of each term; it was on the semester plan.

Schneider: I think perhaps under that general heading comes a question of autonomy. Was there ever a problem between the university and yourself in terms of curriculum?

Chao: Not that I can think of. Between terms of presidents, there was once a resistance to an appointee. He was brought into the university with military protection to take office. Shortly after that, we had a delegation to Nanking to the government objecting to him, and so he was withdrawn.

Schneider: This was an academic or administrative appointment?

Chao: The president of the university, Mr. Wu [Nan-shuen]. Not knowing that I was active in going to the Nanking government for redress, he'd always been sending me Christmas cards. [Laughter]

RL: What was the faculty's and your objection to him?

Chao: Simply because they didn't consult the faculty at all in the choice of him, and his background was somewhat indifferent.

Schneider: When was this, approximately?

Chao: It was in the late 1920s, after the nationalists came to Nanking.

Schneider: We're talking still about Tsing Hua. I was under the impression that it was a relatively independent institution. What was the connection between the Nanking government and the university?

Chao: It was just a government university.

Schneider: Did it have the prefix "Kuo-li" in front of it? National?

Chao: I'm not sure, officially.

Schneider: I've never heard it referred to; that's why I ask. I didn't realize that it was subject to the decisions of the Ministry of Education. You're suggesting, then, that when a new president was needed, the--

Chao: My impression is that the title does include "Kuo-li."

Schneider: The Ministry of Education, I take it, chose the president arbitrarily?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: And they did relent. Who was the president who was ultimately chosen?

Chao: Let me see, who was after him? There were so many.

Schneider: Big turn-over, like American universities in the sixties!

Schneider: The Nanking government consulted you from that point on, did they, in these kinds of decisions, or did you have more problems with them later?

Chao: We did meet at the time with some of the people; I forgot what it was about.

The March 18 Incident, Peking, 1926

RL: What was your attitude during the student riots of 1926?

Chao: At least some of the riots were against the War Lords, so we were more or less in sympathy with them. On the whole, I think most of the faculty was in sympathy with the students.

RL: Were any of them disciplined by the university for their part in the disturbances?

Chao: Not that I remember.

Schneider: We don't really have a great deal written about this March 18th incident. I do remember reading some essays by Chou Tso-jen and Lu Hsun. They seem to imply that these demonstrations and then the government suppression of them had some serious effects on the Peking academic community. Did you sense that there were some serious after-effects?

Chao: There were immediate effects on individuals, but apart from that, I think it was just a growing revolt against the authorities. At that time, I think it was Tuan Ch'i-jui who was premier, one of the reactionaries.

Schneider: So that one couldn't talk about "before" and "after"--as one does in Berkeley--let's say before 1964 and after 1964, that sort of thing.

Chao: The police did investigate our language reform committee, the so-called Society of a Few Men.* They were suspicious

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*See below, p. 77ff.

Chao: about what we were up to. But we assured them that we were members of the minister of education's Committee on Unification of the Language; so they were satisfied.

Schneider: What led them to an awareness of your group in the first place?

Chao: It was this way. After the incident, some students were injured, as well as the teachers. My wife had a birth control clinic in Peking in the same house. There were three compounds--three courtyards; one was her clinic, another was her brother's family, and another was the meeting place of the Society of a Few Men. [Laughter]

When some of the injured people were brought to her hospital, the police also came to ask, "What were you up to?" We showed them we were members of the minister of education's Committee for the Unification of the National Language.

RL: I get the impression from your autobiography (which, of course, was written almost fifty years after the incident) of an attitude that's quite unflurried or terrified. I would like to know how effective the police were at this time. You sound quite unflurried about it now. Were you frightened at the time? Did you have cause to be frightened?

Chao: I can't say I remember anything about being frightened in those days. We were regularly living in Tsing Hua. We came into the city, and on one occasion the Hsi-Chi Gate, Northwestern Gate--was closed; sometimes we had difficulty coming in and out.

On the whole, even in the--I think only on one occasion we had difficulty because that was before that bus line was established; we had to take rickshaws coming in and out of the city.

Schneider: I take it then that you didn't witness any of the actual scuffling or fighting going on?

Chao: No, I didn't actually witness it.

IV LANGUAGE REFORM IN CHINA IN THE '20s

Unification of the National Language

RL: Perhaps Larry would like to ask you some questions about language reform in China in the '20s.

Schneider: I suppose the best place to start is with your own personal goals for language reform.

Chao: I wasn't so much interested in the reform from writing in the classical changing to writing in the colloquial. I just followed the fashion and started writing more and more in the colloquial. As for the unification of the language, I was fairly active. I think it was 1912 or later--I don't remember the exact date--when a system of so-called kuo-yin national pronunciation was decided on, including entering tones and the difference between "o" and "e" (in different dialects, "o" and "e" were varieties of the same phoneme, but in this national pronunciation--kuo-yin--they were distinguished). One of the most important distinctions is between sharp and rounded--that is, between tsi, tsi, si and chi, ch'i, hsi, a distinction which has always been kept by singers of Peking opera. But in the natural speech of Peking, that is not distinguished.

I mentioned the addition of the entering tone (in addition to the first, second, third and fourth tones) with glottal stop endings. Those were the main features of this artificial kuo-yin, and I made a special set of records for it and a textbook to go with it.

RL: Was that the first set in 1923?

Chao: Yes, they were made in--I went to America in '21 and I made the record in New York with Columbia Phonograph Company.

RL: I've heard it said that you were the only person who could speak that language in the whole world. [Laughter] What were, to your mind, the primary objections to the artificial language?

Chao: For one thing, it was hard to find teachers who could speak it naturally. For example, when I made the records, I was the only person who could talk in that pronunciation, whereas, after the change, you had about one million speakers who would be possible teachers.

RL: It seems hard from this perspective to see why sixty years ago an artificial speech was made when there was such a large pool of native speakers. How do you account for the adoption of the artificial system, which seems to go against common sense?

Chao: Some features of it were already known even by natives of Peking, such as the distinction between the dental sibilants "ts," "ts'" and "s" as against a "ch," "ch'" and "hs" before so-called high front vowels (as "i" and "ü"). Singers of Peking opera--even natives of Peking--would have to learn that distinction. That was one of the features adopted. This difference is natural in some other dialects, but not in the city of Peking. Even Mei Lan-fan, the famous opera singer and female impersonator, couldn't make that distinction naturally. His mentor or teacher in pronunciation had to show him.

His teacher, Ch'i Ju-shan, was from Paoting. In the city of Paoting, half the city could make the distinction and half couldn't; he was from the half of the city that could made that distinction.

When I went back to China, in 1925, I made broadcasts to teach standard Mandarin to be received in various provinces. I think many of my associates were more or less concerned with the promotion of Mandarin--what used to be called the national language; we now call it p'u-t'ung hua, the general language.

Also in 1925 I joined the Committee on Unification of the National Language where there were quite a few who were active in promoting the unification and standardizing the pronunciation.

Chao: Among members of that committee, a few of them formed a little group called Society of a Few Men Shu-jen Hui based on the preface of Lu Fa-yen's book, 601 A.D. Ch'ieh Yün the primary source for ancient Chinese of 601 A.D., because in the preface they said, "We few men decide and it is decided," so we called ourselves the Society of a Few Men; some of them would rather have called it Society of a Handful of Men.

Several things were done by this group. For example, the national organization was planned by them. Some of the members were Liu Fu and Lin Yutang, Ch'ien Hsuan-t'ung--that was Ch'ien San-ch'iang, the atomic physicist's father, and Wang Yi.

We decided--that is, the National Committee on the Unification of the Language--decided that we'd better take the natural speech of Peking city. Peiping it was called then. And so, we just found out how people actually spoke.

It's still the standard now--the so-called general speech--p'u-t'ung hua. Peking is now the standard dialect.

Schneider: The first attempt, then, was to teach as the natural language a somewhat artificial construction.

Chao: Yes, like the idea of the German Buhnenaussprach, where the wagen must have a real "g" but not like a fricative; then you have to trill (Buhnenaussprach) and use a lingual "r" and so forth. It's the kind of German which isn't spoken anywhere in Germany.

Schneider: What was the committee's rationalization for choosing an artificial language instead of one of the dialects already spoken?

Chao: We saw that some distinctions were useful. That sharp and rounded distinction--the singers of the Peking opera always had to re-learn the language. As a matter of fact, in the city of Paoting, the northern part being nearer Peking, didn't make the distinction; the southern part of the city did. I don't know how the situation is now. This distinction all over the country appears in patches, except in the extreme south; then there is actually an original ki, k'i, hi for chi, ch'i, hsi and thus easy to distinguish from tsi, ts'i, si.

Chao: In the so-called Mandarin-speaking region--northern Yangtze river and so forth--it appears in patches. In Nanking there is a distinction; in Yangchow there isn't.

Schneider: The committee's premise then was that establishing these distinctions properly would simply be a better form of communication, as long as you were going to establish a national language.

Chao: Yes. Speakers of other dialects would have to learn a new dialect anyway.

Schneider: So they may as well learn something that's more efficient.

RL: Was it more efficient and, if so, along what lines?

Chao: More distinctions could be made, and it was closer to some of the dialects, although not close to that of Peking itself.

Schneider: Was there ever the feeling that it would be better to have an artificial dialect rather than having to choose one of the living dialects and hence, perhaps, offend someone?

Chao: I think that was one of the motives too, so that people wouldn't feel that they were just learning the local dialect of one place, even though it was the capital.

Schneider: But this was abandoned?

Chao: Yes, after about ten years' time.

Schneider: And you felt that it was abandoned primarily for which reasons?

Chao: For one thing, they weren't very successful with only one set of records. As a matter of fact, the first set of records made intended to promote that artificial system was made by a native of Peking who couldn't really pronounce it, and he made a mess of it [laughter]; he just used some of the reading pronunciation and couldn't get it right at all. My set of records was really the second set of records for this artificial standard.

RL: We're speaking of the ones you made at Columbia in 1923?

Chao: Yes. But then, later, I made another set of records using the Peking pronunciation.

RL: Would those be the 1923 or 1925 ones that the commercial press put out?

Chao: I don't know. I think the first set of records I made using the natural speech of Peking was a set of records for teaching foreigners--wai-kuo jen yung (for use of foreigners).

RL: Was it you who made the choice when standardizing the national language of this definition "speech of natives of Peking who have received a middle school education"?

Chao: I don't remember the exact formulation, but that was the general idea, when the committee decided on the revised standard.

RL: And was that what you spoke in your second set of language records:

Chao: That's right.

RL: Was that very different from what they call "blue-green Mandarin"?

Chao: Blue-green Mandarin is a popular phrase describing those people who pick up Mandarin keeping a lot of their own native accent. So there's no standard blue-green Mandarin [laughter]; it depends upon who is saying it.

RL: What techniques were used by you or the Committee on Unification to establish a standard for spoken Chinese? Were there broadcast programs, for instance?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Were these efforts intensive?

Chao: They were supposed to have been received by stations in various provinces.

RL: What about teaching school teachers, which, of course, would be another major approach?

Chao: They made some attempt to reach the teachers; of course, in most parts of the country, it was just learning either one or another of a new dialect--whether the native speech of Peking or this artificial system would be a new dialect for them anyway.

Schneider: What was the relationship between the teaching of this new spoken dialect and written materials? Now, the written materials were supposed to be written in a vernacular form, a colloquial form. Was there an intimate relationship between this new written colloquial and the Peking dialect that ultimately was taught?

Chao: You mean the vocabulary used?

Schneider: Vocabulary, idioms and so on, yes.

Chao: As far as vocabulary and idioms are concerned, there's no difference between the artificial and the native; the difference there is only one of pronunciation. The interesting thing is that in one case, this artificial system is easier for speakers of the Nanking dialect because in the Nanking dialect, they already have the entering tone, they already distinguish between sharp and rounded initials, and they already make the difference between "o" and "e." They have different tone values, but the tone classes are the same; really, it is easy for native speakers of Nanking, except that in the city itself, there are very few speakers of the Nanking dialect. [Laughter] The majority of inhabitants usually came from different parts of the country--at least different parts of the province--and there is a relatively small number who speak a pure Nanking dialect.

They did have a self-consistent system in the Nanking dialect, but I had to pick the right person to record the dialect there. In the high school I went to in Nanking, there were 273 students, I think, and only three of them were native born in Nanking. Of course, in the high school there, many of the students came from other districts.

Schneider: Then, when it came time for the Peking dialect to be the standard, it was all the more difficult.

Chao: Yes. The speaker of Nanking has to re-distribute their fifth tone into the other four, although changing from the sharp and rounded into just one series is easy; you just say whenever you have the ts, ts', s followed by i or ü, pronounce the syllables as chi, ch'i, hsi or chü, ch'ü, hsü. Just one rule will cover everything; it's always easier to combine two classes into one than to separate one class into two.

Schneider: Did you have some personal experience in teaching adults who were then to be teachers, or dealing directly with young students in the new dialect?

Chao: I never did it systematically. Occasionally, I'd give lectures and private consultations, and I gave them insights to how to approach what the difficulties were.

Schneider: That is, with teachers as opposed to the students themselves?

Chao: I did have some students who came for advice.

Schneider: How did they feel about learning the new dialect? Did they resist it or do it easily?

Chao: I think they accepted that it was officially the standard, but it was a lot of time and effort to learn it.

RL: I've just read [John] DeFrancis' book, Nationalism and Language Reform in China.* He thanks you for your consultations, particularly on Chapter Four (One State, One People, One Language), and I wanted to ask if you agreed with the way he presents the Nationalization of the Language Movements, the Romanization movements, and particularly your own Gwoyeu Romatzyh. Did you agree with his general conclusions?

Chao: I don't remember the contents of his book now, but as far as I can recall, I agreed mostly with him.

RL: According to DeFrancis, you told him that Hu Shih said that pai-hua had only been taught to a few intellectuals.

Chao: Perhaps to the modernists, because there were also intellectuals--classicists--who were opposed to pai-hua and didn't bother much with the use of pai-hua. And of course, most publication is still in wen yen, the classical style. To this day, people make up new terms on the basis of the classical language rather than in terms of pai-hua.

RL: Is that true on the mainland also?

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*Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1950.

Chao: Yes, that's what I mean.

Schneider: When he said, "to a few intellectuals," was he emphasizing the "few" or the "intellectuals"? Did he mean that pai-hua wasn't reaching out to the greater number of people or that it was just limited to a small elite? What were the implications?

Chao: To the modernized.

Schneider: Just to a small sector of the population.

Chao: Yes.

RL: What did you do at home or with your friends? Did you speak the new artificial language, for instance, domestically with your wife?

Chao: In my old home in Changchow, of course, we spoke Wu dialect, a Shanghai type of dialect. It was quite something else. I think the standard almost was on the point of being changed when I was married. Anyway, my wife speaks sort of--she was born in Nanking but her home was Anhwei, and she spoke sort of a southern Mandarin with some Anhwei trace. She went to school in Shanghai. Although she wasn't much of a linguist, she had much experience with the dialect. For a while, we played the game of speaking a dialect a day--today Nanking, tomorrow Shanghai, and another day in Hupei, where she had lived.

The one interesting thing is that, although she studied three years in Shanghai, she had always consistently spoken southern Mandarin with her schoolmates and teachers. It was only after we got married that her Shanghai dialect came out loud; for the first time, she spoke it. She learned it by just the hearing; instead of the audio-lingual approach, it was just the audio approach. [Laughter]

RL: When your children were born--

Chao: Let's see. Our children had a very mixed linguistic experience. Our first daughter was born in Cambridge, Mass. and we spoke English to her, I think, at that time. Our second daughter was born in Cambridge, and before she started to talk, we went to Europe for a year and left the children with a French family; the first language of my second daughter, Nova, was French.

Chao: After we went back another year--that was '24--in '25 we went back to Peking and they started to talk northern speech and went to school there, of course, and spoke a northern speech. We left Peking in the early thirties and went south when Academia Sinica was organized in Nanking, spent one year in Shanghai and then later in Nanking. Their dialect was quite mixed in those days, although we spoke Mandarin at home.

RL: In other words, they didn't learn the artificial language.

Chao: No. I don't think I spoke that artificial language consistently with anybody for any length of time.

Schneider: I have one question about the teaching of the Peking dialect when that was finally established as the standard. I would be interested in knowing the form of teaching it and the difficulty of learning it in the schools. Was it necessary by the mid-twenties and later twenties to teach it as one would teach a foreign language? In other words, for a young Chinese student learning this, what kind of effort would have to be put in?

Chao: I think most of it had to do with the matter of pronunciation because in the vocabulary, it's only everyday words, like "this," "that," and personal pronouns; otherwise, the more advanced the material is, the more general it is for all of China. Scientific terms and so forth would be the same.

Schneider: How much effort would a young student have to put in in his school work just to learn these new pronunciations? Was it a casual sort of thing? Were there separate classes for it?

Chao: No. It was usually treated casually, and maybe the result was also casual. [Laughter] It wasn't done very intensively.

Schneider: At the universities, when a student graduated high school in the late twenties and was expected to have learned his Peking dialect, was he going to hear lectures at one of the national universities in Mandarin?

Chao: When you went to a university, it depended on the teacher; sometimes the teacher himself couldn't speak too well. Ku Chieh-kang who taught first in Amoy University and later further north, spoke with a heavy Soochow acent, I think; his students had difficulty following him.

Schneider: What about extra-curricular life on the campus? Did the Peking dialect ever become a kind of lingua franca or did everyone choose to use their own dialects in communicating with each other?

Chao: They tried to approximate each other's, but some form of Mandarin was also used. As a matter of fact, in Chung Shan [university] in Canton where I first visited in 1929, I think, they started a movement using Mandarin in the classes, and the students were expected to follow that. It had made quite a bit of headway.

More recently, last year [1973], when I visited Shanghai and Canton, nine-tenths of the broadcasts were done in Mandarin, in p'u-t'ung hua, and only one-tenth in the local dialect. The same with Canton. In the larger stores, everybody talked some sort of Mandarin, maybe with an accent.

Schneider: In the late twenties and early thirties, there were not as many mass media of course, but on the stage, in the theater, or on films (I understand there were films being done then), was Mandarin used then?

Chao: Mandarin mostly. In the traditional stage, there was also a special traditional stage pronunciation.

Schneider: That, of course, continued?

Chao: Yes. It shares some of the features of the old, artificial Mandarin; like the distinction between sharp and flat; that was an important point in the stage pronunciation.

RL: My last question on this subject was to inquire when you were in China last year, in 1973, how closely did the pronunciation of Mandarin approximate to the standards that you and your friends set in the twenties and thirties?

Chao: There had been much less change than I had anticipated; very little change. Also, on a trip before that, in Hong Kong, I made tape recordings of people who came recently out from China, and I couldn't detect any change that was noticeable. The only thing that struck me was that, in making up new terms--scientific or other terms--they still relied largely on the use of wen yen or the classical language. So that some of them had a lot of sibilants and so forth that didn't really carry too well for oral communication.

RL: That's very interesting.

Chao: Some of the scholars are still formally educated in the classical tradition.

RL: So they draw from the classical tradition rather than from--

Chao: Everyday speech.

RL: Or by matching sounds.

Chao: Yes.

RL: Were films subtitled in characters?

Chao: Foreign films would have Chinese translations, but otherwise they assumed that you could follow the Mandarin conversation.

Romanization and Gwoyeu Romatzyh

RL: When you and your friends were working intensively on romanization in 1925 and so on, how much did you refer to earlier schemes, such as some of the missionary efforts--either examples not to follow or in any other way?

Chao: Yes. Of course, we studied all the various forms--the older system of the BEFEO, the French system, and also the Wade-Giles, of course, which is still recognized; I think Wade-Giles has always been alive and still is, even in mainland China. When they sometimes have to communicate with the West, they use Wade-Giles rather than the new pinyin system.

RL: Why is that, do you think?

Chao: I suppose just the weight of tradition, and also the great amount of publications in western languages using it. Even the French and the Germans, I understand, sometimes use Wade-Giles rather than their own system of romanizing Chinese.

RL: The National Phonetic Alphabet preceded GR [Gwoyeu Romatzyh] and received some official support from the Kuomintang in 1930. DeFrancis said that it failed due to a combination of apathy

RL: and disagreement and distrust. How do you feel about the merits of the National Phonetic Alphabet?

Chao: I wouldn't consider that it has failed, because it still exists as an alternate system, although it's not very popular. It agrees with the structure of the Chinese language in dividing words into initials, medial, and final, so that the longest spelling would be three letters--three of those signs. It goes well on the side of characters in a parallel text of characters and the sound. [Hand gesture vertically down.]

Schneider: Is that the system that's used, for example, in Taiwan in children's books, sometimes picture-books?

Chao: Yes, still actively used.

RL: A good part of DeFrancis' book is on Latinxhua. What did you think of it in the early twenties and thirties when you were concerned with these matters?

Chao: That was one form, the predecessor of the present standard pinyin. Pinyin now again is based on the standard of Peking. Pinyin is more or less the successor to Latinxhua.

RL: Which is what is currently used in China. Did you meet and discuss this sytem with any of its proponents, most of whom had been in Russia, such as Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai?

Chao: Not in detail, no; I never had long discussions with him.

RL: He was subsequently executed. Was it difficult for you to meet with him?

Chao: I don't remember.

RL: From the outside, one gets a picture of such factionalism, such heated disputes. I don't get any of that feeling from you, and I don't know how much this is your temperament and how much this represents how well you were able to get on with many different sorts of people?

Chao: I haven't been to any of the violent arguments, but I heard stories of people throwing teacups at each other after some meeting on the standard of the national language.

Schneider: May I go back to Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai for one moment? I know that he was a rather outspoken critic of the pai-hua movement. But the writings I've read of his ordinarily refer to Hu Shih's conception of pai-hua. Was he more in favor of the kinds of language reforms that you were working with.

Chao: It's so long ago since I've read anything at all, I can't recall.

Schneider: I was never clear quite what he had in mind when he talked about p'u-t'ung hua.

Chao: Yes. That term p'u-t'ung hua has had some changes in the scope of its inclusion. It used to mean--several decades ago--any speech not obviously a special dialect, like Cantonese or Shanghai; any sort of semi-Mandarin speech with any accent. It was only quite recently that the term was adopted to substitute for the term kuo-yu, and with the standard speech of Peking as the standard. So p'u-t'ung hua is really synonymous with what used to be called kuo-yu. You see, kuo-yu had had two standards, originally an artificial standard with certain dictions and later, just the dialect of Peking city.

Schneider: Was a man like Ch'ü Ch'iu-pai against standardization or unification?

Chao: My impression was that he wasn't.

Schneider: He was not against it?

Chao: I can't be sure.

Schneider: I remember him writing about the true pai-hua or true p'u-t'ung hua being the language of "the man in the street," the language of the proletariat. I was never quite sure how that would work with your program.

Chao: There are two ideas--one is the style of speech of different classes, and the other is the phonetic system, which dialect it is that you take as the standard.

RL: Perhaps since you raised this, I could skip a little. Your defense against critics who said that the GR system led to ambiguity was that if a speaker spoke in language that was

RL: clear and full in sound, that the ambiguities would disappear. Can you illustrate what you meant by that?

Chao: I think GR is just intended to be a practical system of writing, where you don't have diacritics, and hyphens, and aspiration marks and so forth. It is truly the equivalent of--say--any of the systems used by Europeans when it's fully written, such as the Wade-Giles system. If you put in all the aspiration signs and the tone signs, they're fully the same and give the same information as GR, so that by hearing a passage written in GR and hearing a passage written in full Wade-Giles spelling, you can't tell the difference; it's just the Peking sound, or the same as when written in the National Phonetic.

RL: You felt that the advantage of GR was the absence of so many diacritical marks?

Chao: That's right. And it also has certain tricks of abbreviation, like changing the spelling instead of adding something. The cost of indicating tones is, I think, something like half a letter, rather than adding an additional letter. It claims to be a distinguishable form of writing, and each syllable has an individual look that you can memorize.

RL: The Kuomintang disapproved of Latinxhua. Was this solely on political grounds, because it had been developed in Soviet Russia?

Chao: I suppose partly at least. And also, the Kuomintang, of course, had already recognized GR as the official form.

RL: How did you feel when some of your old friends, like Wang Yün-wu, supposed Latinxhua?

Chao: I don't remember that he did.

RL: Perhaps that's not accurate. I got that from DeFrancis. On the political side again, did you feel that GR would lead to what's described as integral nationalism, a united country as opposed to Latinxhua, which had different romanizations for some of the other areas like Kwangtung, and would lead to a form of federated nationalism?

Chao: I don't think that the relation is as clear as that, although it is possible--it's intended to be, may be possible to write it in the other dialects. On the other hand, you could just as well adapt GR to other dialects--in fact, I did have a system of transcription for Cantonese on the same principles that GR is on.

RL: What happened to that Cantonese system?

Chao: I used it in one of my Cantonese textbooks, and I found a use for it for purposes of instruction.

RL: When you were instructing, I assume that was westerners. Do you think it would have been equally useful for teaching reading to Cantonese speakers?

Chao: For teaching reading to Cantonese? I haven't taught Cantonese to Cantonese. [Laughter]

Schneider: Of course, Mr. DeFrancis' book was published in 1950. Has there been some revival of the system or some greater interest shown in it since 1950, which he would not have had a chance to put in his book?

Chao: I wouldn't call it revival, because it has more or less been used all along.

Schneider: Some greater interest shown in it since '50 for some reason?

Chao: No, I can't say. In China itself now, there is no opposition to the National Phonetic Alphabet, although they don't use it much.

Schneider: Where would it be used on the mainland? What kinds of places?

Chao: They don't actively use it, but they use materials which have been published using that system.

Schneider: Reprinting.

Chao: Yes. And of course, people who were interested in language and dialects would still use those materials.

RL: We talked last week about [Bernhard] Karlgren.* He was very critical of GR [Gwoyeu Romatzyh]. Was this damaging?

Chao: I don't think it had much effect because Karlgren's contact with Chinese were mostly with the technical personnel in phonology.

RL: I'm interested in the aims of the Ministry of Education. I think you were asked with your colleagues to prepare a romanization system, which was officially adopted only in 1928. How did you feel about official lack of interest in the scheme?

Chao: In general, in the official circles, they didn't push very hard any of those schemes, except perhaps unification of the national [spoken] language; they did encourage the idea of unification. But as to the difference between various schemes or representations, and also various standards of pronunciation, like the question of whether you use an artificial--kuo yu--national pronunication, or use the dialect of Peking city, the official circles were somewhat indifferent. It was up to the committee to decide.

RL: When DeFrancis mentions your translation of A.A. Milne's play, The Camberley Triangle, he describes it as a text written in GR for the promulgation of Gwoyeu Romatzyh. Is that accurate?

Chao: It wasn't primarily for that. One of the purposes was to have an extended text written in that form, a parallel text with the characters.

RL: I forget who made this comment, but you were talking about the unification of the national language. I have a quotation here that "literacy is necessary, but unification of the national language is even more important." Did you feel at that time, in the twenties, that that was true?

Chao: Is that what I said?

RL: No, I don't think you said it. I haven't got a page reference here. But in the pulling and hauling within professional,

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*Bernhard Karlgren, Études sur la phonologie chinoise, Upsala, K.W. Appelberg, 1915-1926.

RL: academic and government circles, it seemed to be that romanization fell by the wayside many times either because of other government priorities or because unification of speech was felt to be more important.

Chao: Actually, of course, romanization would be an important instrument for unification.

RL: How would that be?

Chao: Because romanization is romanized in one dialect; the national romanization is the dialect of Peking, the admitted standard.

RL: Yes, but even with English that is romanized, you have speakers who are literally unintelligible [laughter] to other English speakers. I'm thinking of Yorkshire mine workers, for example.

Chao: Something of theoretical maybe minor importance was that we decided that a superscript after a letter meant a little additional sound, whereas a subscript means an adjectival modification of the preceding sound. That has been more or less followed by Academia Sinica, both the old Academia Sinica and what they now call K'o-hsueh Yuan, of which the western name is still Academia Sinica.

RL: You mean the one on Taiwan or the mainland?

Chao: The mainland. In Taiwan it's called Chung-yang Yen-chiu Yuan.

Language Reform and Literature

RL: I would like to ask you about language reform and literature. Perhaps we could start with your famous translation of Alice in Wonderland.* I was talking to [Wolfram] Eberhard last night, and he admitted with shame that he had never read Alice in Wonderland in either English, German or Chinese [laughter] but that when he was in China in the thirties, your translation was spoken of so much and many girls had the name A-li-ssu or

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*A-li-ssu man-yu ch'i-ching chi (translation of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll), Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1923.

RL: or Alice; perhaps it resulted from your translation. Why did you choose that particular book for your first translation?

Chao: I had liked Lewis Carroll books when I was a student at Cornell. I thought it would be fun to translate that into Chinese. In this first translation, I didn't stick too closely to actual speech style. It was Through the Looking Glass that I translated more strictly following the original and strictly in the colloquial form. Another thing was that in Through the Looking Glass I followed the original meter and rhyming scheme of the English. You can't do that with classical Chinese because it takes so many more syllables in English than in Chinese to get the same ideas across; in modern spoken Chinese, you use more syllables anyway.

RL: How did you cope with the nonsense words?

Chao: I made up nonsense words with similar sounds.

RL: How was this received in China?

Chao: That sold very well, the Alice in Wonderland books. In fact, the second year, Shen Ts'ung-wen, one of the writers there, wrote Alice in China (Alissu Chung-kuo Tu-chi); it was more serious, a political satire.

RL: Have you seen the Annotated Alice* which came out a few years ago? It's by an American scholar, and he's given a very elaborate and funny footnote apparatus to both Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

Chao: I missed that one.

RL: Would you like to see it? I'll bring it next time.

Chao: Yes, I would like to. Is that a new book?

RL: Four or five years old.

Chao: Then it's still available. In general, it's easier to translate western verse into modern colloquial Chinese than the classic.

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*Introduction and notes by Martin Gardner, New York. C.N. Potter, 1960.

RL: Did you make a reasonable income from your writing?

Chao: It sold fairly well in several editions. The royalties in those days were very minor sums. I got a royalty from my songs of contemporary poems;* I think the last account I got from Taiwan was something like seven dollars per year.

RL: Who read Alice in Wonderland in Chinese? Was it read by adults, or read to children, or read by children?

Chao: I have no idea. I came across more adults who read it. I've read it to my own children.

Schneider: Western editions of Alice are always illustrated. Was yours?

Chao: Yes. We used the original Tenniel illustrations.

Schneider: They used his? I see.

Publishing with the Commercial Press, Shanghai

RL: I noticed that your first five publications were with the Commercial Press in Shanghai. Why did you publish with them?

Chao: In those days, I guess, the Commercial Press had more branches than any other. One of my books on Basic English was published by the Chung-hua Book Company; that was the second largest publisher. Commercial Press was the largest.

RL: Did they at that time have a branch in Peking?

Chao: Yes, but I think I did my negotiations with Shanghai.

RL: Can you describe some of the people who were running it? Who was head of it, for instance, at that time?

Chao: Kao Meng-ta, I think, was the head of it at that time. Wang Yün-wu was much later; he called himself W.W. Wang because in Cantonese pronunciation, Wang Yun would be W.W.

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*Kuo-yin hsin shih-yün (New book of rhymes), VIII - 105 pp., Commercial Press, Shanghai, 1923.

RL: Was he a scholar?

Chao: He wasn't particularly a research scholar but he was very scholarly. He was head of the supervisory Yuan in Taiwan; after he retired, he went back to Commercial Press again.

RL: What was their major output? Was it school books or texts?

Chao: They published everything, an enormous amount of publications.

Schneider: Did you find them flexible in the kinds of things they published? Did they question the utility of Alice?

Chao: They accepted it readily.

RL: Did advertising and distribution and other financial procedures between author and publisher differ from the sorts of procedures we're used to in the west?

Chao: I think it was quite similar, although I think they didn't go about it as intensively as in the west. Most of the people who worked in Commercial Press were trained in the western tradition.

RL: About how large a printing was the average edition of one of your publications with them?

Chao: I can't tell. I used to get periodic reports of sales.

RL: I read somewhere that, for a new novel, they would print either a thousand or two thousand copies.

Chao: I would say nowadays they print more, assuming there's a greater literacy among the people.

RL: Problems of fiction in China--I wonder if you ever knew van Gulick.*

Chao: Yes, I met him.

RL: Did you discuss the problems of writing fiction in colloquial Chinese with him?

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*Robert Hans van Gulick, The Lore of the Chinese Lute: An Essay on Ch'in Ideology, Tokyo, Sophia University, 1940.

Chao: No, I don't recall. I think it was Chinese music we discussed; he was interested in Chinese music.

RL: What did you think of his work on the Chinese lute?

Chao: I think it was a good piece of work, a good piece of research, although I have myself made no special study of the Chinese lute.

How do you pronounce the word z-i-t-h-e-r?

RL: Zither.

Chao: Zither. I think nowadays they prefer to translate the Chinese word ch'in as zither rather than lute.

Theater

RL: Moving on to the theater, I noticed that you translated and staged A.A. Milne's The Camberly Triangle. Why did you choose this play?

Chao: I can't remember whether I saw it performed in the west or what. Anyway, those were the days when we were interested in having real live conversation written as one would actually speak. So, we did the translation and put it on stage.

RL: Who was there? What sort of audience did you have?

Chao: I would say mostly students and teachers rather than the general public.

RL: This play is a triangle situation--two men in love with one woman. Was this considered at all shocking?

Chao: No. And also, although Chinese names were given to them, they were supposed to be foreign; we had foreign scenery. [Laughter]

RL: Did it seem exciting, or a novelty? This isn't a theme in classical Chinese.

Chao: No. There were other spoken plays staged in those days; it wasn't one of the first.

RL: It appears to have been a time of active translation of western plays into Chinese. Was this a deliberate part of the language reform movement?

Chao: I don't think it was especially connected with the reform movement. It was useful material for using the colloquial because in a play the dialects have to be in the colloquial.

RL: In Shanghai you have a very wide range of western playwrights being translated--Goldoni, Gogol, Mollière and so on. What sort of a spread did you have in Peking? Which authors were the most popular?

Chao: I haven't followed that very closely, but I don't think there was much difference between Shanghai and Peking. Usually when something was produced in Shanghai, it was also produced in the other and vice versa. It might have been slightly different in Canton because of the use of Mandarin.

RL: They would have to do their own translations, you mean?

Chao: Yes. A play in Mandarin in Canton would be hard to follow for a Cantonese, but speech of Shanghai dialect--although Shanghai is very different from Mandarin--people there would have a passing knowledge of Mandarin.

RL: What about the German influence in Peking? I gathered from Mr. Eberhard that there was a very strong German colony. Did they stage the plays of Goethe and Schiller and so on?

Chao: Not especially, not that I noticed.

RL: You mentioned Peking opera before. Did you enjoy going to Peking opera?

Chao: I didn't like Peking opera, actually, very much, because-- I think I can say that I don't enjoy opera very much [laughter] in any country. My theory is that the music interfers with the intelligibility of the words and the words interferes with the free play of music, whereas those who like opera would say that one enhances the other. It's probably a matter of taste.

RL: [To LS] Professor Chao took part in a performance of Aida here in 1919. [Laughter]

Chao: Yes, when I was a student here.

RL: Did you ever see the famous actor, Mei Lan-fan?

Chao: Yes. I knew him personally. He came to our house in Peking and asked me about pronunciation. He was a native of Peking without the distinction of the sharp and flat (tsi-ts'i-si and chi-ch'i-hsi); his adviser, Ch'i Ju-shan from Paoting, could make these sounds, so he often would correct Mei about pronouncing those words.

RL: What did you do? Did you help him, give him some coaching?

Chao: We just discussed some things in general about pronunciation.

RL: Were you impressed with him?

Chao: He was very approachable, a very fine fellow, yes.

RL: I understand that he mostly took female roles.

Chao: Yes. Once in a long time, he would switch roles just for fun, but normally he took female roles.

RL: Was he effeminate-looking?

Chao: He was young-looking for his age, not especially effeminate. But on the stage, he was properly dressed up and made up.

RL: I gather that he was really one of the dominant stars of the Peking scene at that time.

Chao: Yes, he was.

RL: Did you also know Ch'i Ju-shan?

Chao: I don't think he performed; he just advised Mei Lan-fan.

RL: Eberhard was mentioning to me this circle of people--Harold Acton, Gustave Ecke, and others who were close to Mei Lan-fan. I wondered if you knew this group or took any part in it?

Chao: I knew Ecke; I don't think I knew the others.

RL: Did you have any particular preferences among the Peking opera?

Chao: I liked that "k'ung ch'eng chi"--whatever play it was--the strategy of the empty city (k'ung ch'eng chi), with Chu-ko Liang as one of the characters.

Folklore and Language Reform

RL: Did you notice a relationship between the folklore societies and language reform?

Chao: I don't think there was any particularly close relation, they were just interested in collecting folklore and folk songs. I wasn't very active in that. I did try to record some of the old folk songs I used to know as a child.

RL: What led you to study the Yao folk songs and the Tibetan love songs?

Chao: I was actually doing dialect survey in Hunan, and in Kwangtung, Kwangsi and so forth. It happened that in Canton city there were some people who knew by heart some of the Yao folk songs. I had them pronounce them and I transcribed them. I was also interested in the fact that a lot of the vocabulary were borrowings from Chinese. The basis of the language, of course, is non-Chinese, but there were a lot of borrowings, and in the borrowings it constituted practically a different Chinese dialect.

RL: Had this been recognized before?

Chao: Yes, people realized that the Yao people did borrow a lot of Chinese words. It was possible for me to write tables of correspondence between different vowels and consonants, between the Yao pronunciation and the dialect from which they borrowed.

As for the Tibetan, it happened that there was a Tibetan in Peking who knew a lot of the Tibetan folk songs, and with Mr. Yü Tao-ch'üan, who knew more Tibetan than I did, we recorded them. He did most of the translation and I recorded the songs.

RL: The folklore societies, I gather, were, at least at some stages, somewhat suppressed and, according to Eberhard, more than ten thousand people fled to Canton from Peita. I wonder if you know anything about the circumstances, what they did to cause the persecution, why they went to Canton?

Schneider: When was this?

RL: Middle thirties? Eberhard arrived in China in 1934.

Chao: I was in Nanking from '34 to '37. Academia Sinica was in Nanking at that time. Why wasn't I aware of this flight of folksong writers?

RL: No, they were people studying folklore--folklore societies. It seems a very large figure, ten thousand.

Chao: I can hardly believe it's true.

RL: Eberhard also mentioned Chung Ching-wen and asked if you knew him, if you worked with him at all?

Chao: I never knew him.

Schneider: He was a friend of Ku Chieh-kang--younger.

RL: Were you at all interested in some of the things which the communist government has been very interested in--things like shadow plays and puppet plays and hand puppet plays?

Chao: Not especially. I saw some of the shows but only as a layman; I've never studied those things.

Schneider: When you were doing your surveys of dialects and then later recording Yao and Tibetan material, the so-called folklore movement was growing out of Peking. It seems that generally there had grown up an interest perhaps from the late teens into the early twenties, an interest in all forms of folklore, starting with folk songs. To what do you attribute this? Does it seem as sudden to you as it appears when one goes back over the record? What motivated people to study these things?

Chao: I suppose it was just the general idea of reaching the people rather than confining your own study to the review of the classics. The general idea was finding out how things are as they are found among the people rather than getting everything from books.

Schneider: Was this perceived as a sharp break from the way scholars behaved in the past?

Chao: I don't know whether to call it a sharp break; it's certainly a different direction of activity on the part of scholars.

Schneider: Where did they get their inspiration--not suggesting necessarily that there was one inspiration?

Chao: I suppose western influence had something to do with it. People in the west--Europe and America--did go into the field to find out how things are rather than digging in the library finding out how things were.

Schneider: Were there some individuals that stand out in your mind as being Chinese intellectuals who were sort of pioneers or who set the standard for this kind of activity? In the twenties, let's say.

Chao: Hu Shih was in favor of it, although he himself didn't do very much in this line, and Ku Chieh-kang.

RL: William Yeh?

Chao: What's the Chinese name?

RL: I'm afraid I don't know.

Schneider: There are some people whose names are sometimes associated with the folklore movement, but it's not clear to what degree they actually went into the field. Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung was one.

Chao: Yes. He was very much in favor of the idea but he himself stuck more with books. [Laughter] He's very radically-minded, but somewhat old fashioned in his actions.

RL: On that point of being radically-minded, in nineteenth-century England, Morris and his folklore and all those movements had very slight political connotations, whereas in other countries and I would think particularly in China, some "folk movements" had a left-wing bias. How true is that observation--that those people who were interested in folklore were also very interested in reform and possibly in revolution?

Chao: I think there is a certain positive correlation. As for Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung's radically-minded aspect, I think at one time he even advocated the use of Esperanto to displace the Chinese language. I don't know whether he took it seriously when he said that.

Schneider: Among the ways, apparently, that some of these scholars suggested that reform could be facilitated through the folklore movement was the use of folk traditions by the reformists. For example, taking traditional folk plays and re-writing them so that they carried a new reform message. Were you ever witness to these kinds of things? Did you ever yourself advocate using, for example, a folk song as a medium for carrying a modern message?

Chao: No, I've never done that sort of thing.

Schneider: Did you ever yourself witness any of the results of some of these efforts to reform through traditional folk plays or folk songs.

Chao: Of course, I've seen plays advocating social and intellectual changes, and of course the spoken drama itself is a new institution, is an imported, western institution; all [Chinese] drama was sung previously.

Schneider: I had heard that some of the Peking University professors enjoyed taking folk songs that were popular and writing what technically would be parodies of them for occasional purposes. Did you ever hear any of those?

Chao: Yes. I can't recall any specific instance of it.

Schneider: But it was done?

Chao: Yes.

New Styles in Intellectual Enterprise

RL: Is there anything else you would like to say about the folklore movement or folk songs--their importance in your life or the intellectual life of the Chinese at this period?

Chao: As far as I could notice, that aspect of it didn't have so much to do with life in general as the change from writing in the classical into writing in the vernacular. That was a real important change--making writing in the vernacular more respectable or fashionable.

Schneider: You suggested that one of the motivations for the folklore movement in its various forms was to get to know people more directly. Did it have that effect, do you think? Did it achieve that?

Chao: It brought the intellectuals more into contact with various classes of people than before.

Schneider: Was that your experience in your dialect work--that you got to know classes of people that you might not have otherwise?

Chao: Yes, although, unfortunately, in my dialect work when I tried to make contact, usually I'd get students, who are not representative, who didn't know too much of the traditional form of the dialect I was surveying. I had to write down very carefully the background of the speech of my informants.

Schneider: Finally, did your work in the realm of dialects, as well as the people working in folklore--was there some sense that there was here a contribution here to the so-called new culture, which was always being talked about in the 1920s?

Chao: Of course, that sort of thing was unscholarly from the old point of view. In that respect, it formed part of the new culture movement.

Schneider: That is to say, working in an area of scholarship which previously had not been considered legitimate. Did you all, by 1937, the time of the war, think you had succeeded in making this a legitimate, scholarly enterprise?

Chao: Yes. By 1937 it was recognized everywhere.

RL: What brought about the change, do you think?

Chao: I think through the activities at different universities--Of course, when the Kuomintang took over, the official view was that you should take the modern point of view in regard to scholarship. But even before then, I think all along--the late 1910s, 1920s and 1930s--all these things were academically respectable already.

RL: It must have been a period of great excitement, a renaissance or perhaps a birth of new learning in China. Did you feel yourself very much part of the new wave?

Chao: At least I felt I was in sympathy with the newer movement. The earliest contact with such new feelings about study and research--at least when I came into contact with such movements--was way back in the early 1900s, before the republican revolution, and some of the publications were not approved by the authorities, were even secretly put out.

Schneider: These would have been publications on language reform?

Chao: Not so much language reform but reform in general and the introduction of western ideas. Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, himself a loyalist, was in favor of many changes, although he, himself, wasn't very much active in the vernacular literature movement. I think I said before that the funniest thing was that in 1917, when Hu Shih advocated the use of the vernacular in writing, he himself wrote that article in the classical style.

RL: Would there have been any problem in its being read had he written it in the vernacular style?

Chao: I don't think so, because people did read the vernacular style--Dream of the Red Chamber--and various novels, except that they were not respectable in those days. [Laughter]

Schneider: Did you get much serious opposition in the twenties from the professors at Tung-nan ta-hsüeh who wrote, let's say, Hsüeh Heng in kind of a classical form?

Chao: By that time, those at Tung-nan ta-hsüeh were already aware that they were the minority in those days; they could oppose what you did, but they couldn't do much about it.

Schneider: Their journal, in which they continued to write in classical style, went on till 1933. Was it kind of a perversity on their part, or what did they represent?

Chao: They represented the classical tradition.

Schneider: They felt that there was some hope in doing it? I'm trying to get at why you think they might have continued so long with the fight?

Chao: Well, their tradition is still being carried on in some writings.

Schneider: Were there any individuals at the university that were more outspoken than others in opposing the kinds of language change that you were supporting?

Chao: No. Of course, I myself was more interested in dialect study and unification of the national language than advocating the writing of the new vocabulary in literature.

Y.R. Chao as Composer and Singer

RL: Today I've brought a cassette that Mr. Eberhard lent me with records of Chinese music of the '20s and '30s on it.* Mr. Chao composed the music and sang some of the songs for Pathé. I'd like to play it now, and ask Professor Chao to comment as we go along.

[A very martial song; with chorus]

Chao: I think words of three of those verses have been censored; that's why the piece is just hummed. I'm not sure whether I did both the words and the music, or one of them, but I think I probably did the words as well, and they were censored for political reasons.

Schneider: What were the words?

Chao: I don't remember. [Laughter]

RL: Could you give an approximate date for this?

Chao: The late '20s or early '30s. I could perhaps look it up in my papers, although it would take some time to find it.

Schneider: About this censorship--I'm sorry I didn't pick up on the content of the song--what was the general flavor of it?

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*A copy of this cassette has been deposited in The Bancroft Library.

Chao: There's nothing; simply, just look inside, wanting each other.

RL: Look inside what?

Chao: Look inside the city; look at the lights. So, there's no content because the content has become all "ah, ah."

Schneider: Do you have any recollection of what it might have been about?

Chao: No. Maybe about the bad state of the livelihood of people, things like that.

RL: How did the censorship work?

Chao: Actually, it was just opposed, I suppose, by the authorities; they didn't actually carry out any strict enforcement of such opposition.

RL: It was a form of voluntary compliance?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: Was it a popular song that was played on the radio?

Chao: No, it went with the movie, Tu-shih Feng-kuang. Tu-shih means a metropolis, feng-kuang means sights, and scenery, and things happening.

Schneider: Was that the title song?

Chao: I think it was just sung in the film.

RL: Did you do a lot of work for the movies?

Chao: No, not much. Occasionally.

RL: I'll play the next song.

[Melodic love song; Mr. Chao singing, with piano and violin accompaniment.]

Schneider: Bravo!

Chao: That's the song I collaborated with Liu Fu (Liu Pan-nung), the phonetician. It's still a very popular song, 叫我如何不想他?(Chino Wo Jo-ho Pu Hsiang T'u?)--"How Can I Help Thinking of T'a?" T'a is him or her as the case may be.

As a matter of fact, this morning, at seven o'clock, I had a call long-distance from Taiwan, asking me about the circumstances of composing that song. [Laughter] Let me see, it was ten o'clock their time.

RL: Would you mind telling us what you told the inquirer from Taiwan?

Schneider: If it's repeatable. [Laughter]

Chao: They just wanted to know whether it was addressed to anybody in particular. I said the words were general.

RL: I wondered, as I thought about the conventional image of a Chinese scholar, how your colleagues reacted to these activities of yours?

Chao: Well, apparently they didn't mind.

RL: When we talked about music a little earlier, you said you tended not to use Chinese influences much because you liked to use western harmony. But this seems to me to have close links with at least one of the Chinese traditions of music.

Chao: What do you mean? It's slightly pentatonic--not exactly, but the melody is slightly Chinese. But that modulation from E major to G major is very western, and back to E major.

RL: I gather this was perhaps one of the most popular songs in China. Was this in the 1930s or '20s. Do you remember when you wrote it?

Chao: There's a much later edition not published until rather recently--a collection of songs of contemporary poems, but it includes that as one of them.

RL: How were records distributed then? Were they sold in record shops?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Did you and your friend, Liu Fu, make much money from it?

Chao: I did get some royalties, but from this record I got very little. It was from the Mandarin teaching record that I got a little more.

Schneider: Was this song distributed as sheet music?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: So, in addition to the record, this was being circulated too.

Chao: It's right here--one of the large blue books, greenish-blue. I'd like to give a copy to each one of you, with my compliments.

RL: Thank you very much. What is this called?

Chao: It's called Hsin Shih Ke Chi.*

Schneider: Thank you.

[Another song, with chorus.]

RL: Did you also sing this one?

Chao: Yes. I don't think that's in this collection--"Punting on the Yangtze River."

RL: Were you in any way in this following the "Song of the Volga Boatmen"?

Chao: No, this is actually based on the melody I heard of Chinese boatmen.

RL: When you were a child?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: Beautiful.

Chao: That change back into the major is an entirely western idea.

Schneider: I take it that yours was the first transcription of this.

Chao: Yes, I think so. I haven't seen it elsewhere.

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*Hsin Shih Ke Chi (Songs of Contemporary Poems), Shanghai 1928, Taipei 1960, 66pp.

RL: Did you find many people interested in this, connected, let's say, with the folklore movement?

Chao: Not especially. Most people interested in folklore in general were interested in music, but not especially in the westernized form of it.

RL: Let's hear a little bit more.

[Spoken English: Sea Rhyme. Words by Hsu Chih-mo, music by Y.R. Chao. Sung by Columbia Teachers' College Singers, under the direction of Pao-ch'en Lee. Piano, chorus, and orchestra.]

Chao: That also was performed in Taiwan. This is another recording, I guess, but in Taiwan there was a concert in which this was performed in '59, I think.

RL: But you composed it much earlier.

Chao: Yes, at least before the date of publication of this book.

Schneider: So before 1928

Chao: Yes. In fact, the poet--Hsu Chih-mo--had no chance to hear it; he had died before it was published.

RL: Were you sought out by poets? How did these collaborations occur?

Chao: Some of them I had consultations with; some of the older ones, of course, I had no chance to consult. On perhaps half of those numbers there, I did consult with the writers.

Schneider: In this last instance with Hsu Chih-mo, did you have an opportunity to consult with him?

Chao: Yes. He asked me to compose it, but too bad he never had a chance to hear it; as you know, he died in an airplane accident.

Schneider: Yes, a great loss.

RL: You must have had a great deal of fun with this; did you give private concerts for your friends?

Chao: I wouldn't call them concerts; not on any large scale, but I would play them to groups of friends.

RL: What was your interest in collecting children's songs? I noticed that you published a collection in 1935.

Chao: How did I start getting interested in those? [Pause] I can't recall [laughter] how it got started, but I did it and found it very interesting.

RL: How did you go about it? Was it from your children's friends?

Chao: Yes, mostly, or rather friends' children, and children's friends.

V THE DIALECT SURVEYS*

Purposes of the Surveys

RL: I'd like you to talk about the series of dialect studies that you did in the twenties and thirties. Were these technically studies or surveys? I mean, were you finding the boundaries of where a dialect spread to, or were you studying the dialect as it was spoken by a typical speaker?

Chao: I think, more or less, the idea was to get the speech of what I thought would be representative of a certain region. But when I stopped at a place, I would try to get speakers from various surrounding districts in the same province.

For example, in Changsha, which was my headquarters for a while, I had been under the impression that Changsha was more representative of the dialect of Hunan, being the capital of the province, but soon I realized that wasn't the case. I had assumed that Changsha had voiced stops [b, d, g] (as in French), but actually it had only the so-called voiceless lenes stops, the soft articulation--sort of "b̥" "d̥" "g̥" but not really "b" "d" "g."

That was true of Changsha, but in the majority--at least in the western parts of Human province, they had really voiced initials, as fully voiced as in French.

Then in another district, one man was asked where he was from; his district was on the west side of Hunan province, what would be called ch'ien ch'eng in Mandarin. I asked where he was from he said [dʑien dzən], with a fully voiced [dz]

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*See my field work on the Chinese dialects, Computational Analyses of Asian and African Languages, Tokyo 1975.

Chao: and [dz]. So, we got fairly good representatives from each district we went to.

The only drawback, as I was saying, is that it's hard to get people who were literate but who spoke naturally the native dialect; we often got students who were too young to know some of the tradition. Some of them were under the impression that I was a representative of the minister of education surveying the status of the spread of Mandarin, so they tried to approximate Mandarin speech. But I quickly told them that that wasn't my job.

Schneider: Why was it useful for you to have a literate person?

Chao: I would want to duplicate that sort of thing that Karlgren had in the whole vocabulary. In order to reach that, I'd use what they called a type list, representing all possible initials and finals and tones. There were a whole syllabary to ask them. In some cases, of course, you had to tell them, "This word, as in..." such and such a compound.

Schneider: So being literate was a means for you to have them reproduce sounds that you wanted to have?

Chao: Yes.

RL: I still would like to pursue that a little bit. Was the function of being literate that they had a larger vocabulary than a peasant or that they could read a character that you presented, so that you got their speech uncontaminated by any pronunciation that you might use?

Chao: The use of characters is just to be able to cover all the possibilities of the initial consonants involved, and tones. If I could stay in each place long enough, of course, I could acquire a working knowledge of the dialect, talk with them, and then try to reach all of the points of their phonology. That, of course, would take much longer.

As a matter of fact, I did try to get a smattering of the dialect so as to put the informants at ease to speak their own rather than approximating some of what they imagined to be Mandarin.

RL: Would you estimate how long it took you to acquire a smattering and how long it would have taken you to acquire a working knowledge of a new dialect?

Chao: It's hard to say; it may depend upon how far away it is from the dialects I knew. Usually a week or so. Of course, I did homework before going to the place.

RL: A week to acquire a smattering?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How long would it have taken you to have spoken fluently?

Chao: That would depend on the place. If it was a place like Amoy, it would take me maybe two months; if it's some of the other dialects, it takes less time. But then, as to vocabulary--what you call things--there's no limit to that.

RL: I'm still not quite clear technically whether you were doing studies or surveys. I'm not sure how important this question is. A survey appears, at least according to some usage, to have the connotation of establishing the geographical limits.

Chao: I don't think; from the point of view of our institute, we were interested exactly so much in the geographical limits of different dialects, as in having the largest number of representative dialects in the country. A really complete geographical survey would have to involve many more places than we went to.

We did find that in the eastern part of Hunan it had characteristics of Kiangsi province, the next province.

Sometimes we were able to find the dividing lines--what we call isoglottal, lines, isoglosses, separating different dialects--which didn't quite follow the political divisions of the provinces.

Early Recording Instruments: the Kymograph and the Spectrograph

RL: I'd like to ask you about the kymograph; what did it look like, how did it work, and was it an effective machine for phonologists?

Chao: It was actually adapted from a physiological instrument to record the pulse and so forth. It was just a revolving drum with smoked paper over it with a needle. The speaker would

Chao: speak into a tube activating this tiny little diaphragm which moved the needle with a feather-light point touching the paper. So, as the drum revolved, then the sound waves would be recorded. The result was a recording of the actual sound waves.

It's very hard to read sound waves as such because the ear integrates sound and perceives pitch by the frequency and perceives quality even more delicately by the overtones.

RL: You mentioned smoked paper. Does that mean a dark paper?

Chao: Actually, it's a loose smoke so that the feather-like tip would be able to make marks on it.

RL: How do you store something as fragile as that?

Chao: I don't remember. I think it was with Stephen Jones I learned about those things; the paper was smoked shortly before actual use.

RL? How?

Chao: I don't remember that burning something and the smoke blown onto it.

Schneider: In other words, there was a light film of carbon on the surface.

Chao: Yes, that's right. Any place you touched would make a mark on it. Only a feather-light touch would make a mark.

RL: So that the result--the writing, as you might say--would also be extremely fragile.

Chao: Yes. You could fix it with some liquid or take a photograph of it. With the later spectrograph--the spectrograph I was using in the phonetic lab here, I haven't used it for quite a while--that is more permanent when it's done; there's no need to fix it I don't think. You have your whole picture right away. It takes less space too, because it integrates the sound wave.

RL: How big, roughly, was the kymograph?

Chao: The kymograph would be about 18" wide and 6" high, so you don't

Chao: get much on--maybe a couple of words on a cylinder. Whereas, with the spectrograph, you can have a whole sentence, or a couple of sentences on a cylinder.

RL: Were any useful results achieved with the kymograph, did you feel?

Chao: Well, for quite a number of years, practical phoneticians didn't find too much use for the kymograph.

The only exception was the work of Liu Fu. His name as a poet is Liu Pan-nung, but his name as a phonetician is Liu Fu. In his dissertation at the Sorbonne, he was the first to record on the kymograph the four tones of Mandarin. Then, of course, you could count the number of waves for each second and so forth and find out how the tones went.

RL: Was his discovery well received in France?

Chao: Yes, it was well received, except that the French, perhaps, didn't realize how important those four tones were for the Chinese. From a linguistic point of view, they are so much part of the word as vowels, consonants and vowels. Whereas, from a western point of view, tones seem to be something added extra because you use pitch of the voice for expression rather than as constituent parts of words.

Later--much later--when the spectrograph was used, you began to be able to read the sounds because a spectrograph was an integrating instrument which showed you the actual intervals and the frequencies and sometimes the accompanying overtones to some extent, so that it was possible to learn to read the sounds from a spectrograph but not from a kymograph.

The spectrograph was developed in England--University of London. I've forgotten the names of some of those people there; they were used, and later taken over by the Bell Telephone labs here. They use the spectrograph.

Schneider: Did you use the spectrograph in your own work?

Chao: I did for a while, yes, when I was doing experimental work. As I was saying, the first study of the four tones of Mandarin was done on a kymograph.

Schneider: What about in your own personal studies?

Chao: I didn't do any studies with the kymograph. I just learned to practice with it under my teachers, but I didn't use it myself.

Schneider: I also take it that, in order to use these things, the subjects being studied--the informants--would have to come to the kymograph; it sounds like it might have been a little too clumsy to move about, is that true?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: So, in other words, for field work--

Chao: It's not so practical.

Equipment

RL: What sort of equipment did you use in your interviews?

Chao: In the very beginning, we used wax cylinders; later, we had tape recorders. But we had to carry our own power supply because in most of the places there would be no electricity.

Schneider: The wax cylinders operated on spring power, did they?

Chao: That's right. You wound them up.

Schneider: How early did tape recorders come?

Chao: I think it was in the early 1930s, or even in the 1920s because I went to Canton in 1929 and I think I used a tape recorder.

Schneider: Was it actually tape as we have here, or was it wire? I remember an old wire recorder.

Chao: I did use that for a year or so, but I didn't like it.

Schneider: Very messy. And you carried dry cells with you to power these things?

Chao: Yes.

RL: There must have been a tremendous amount of equipment then?

Chao: Yes, a lot of weight.

RL: How did you manage? I assume you came by train to the main area; then what happened from there?

Chao: We usually tried to bring people in, or people were already there who came from different parts of the province. In the Kiangsi [province], I did go way down to Kanchow [city] in southern Kiangsi; it's way down there, and the communication was somewhat difficult.

RL: Could you give us a description of exactly what was involved in using a wax cylinder? How did you start out? How was the equipment set up and what was your power source, and approximately how much space was needed?

Chao: One of those recorders was about the size of this typewriter [about 15" square]. There was a microphone to speak to, and as it turned, the stylus would make waves on the cylinder. Then the player would play from the wax cylinder. After a certain number of times, it would wear out the wax to use it.

RL: About how many times could you play it?

Chao: You could play it maybe a couple of hundred times before it completely wore out.

RL: How were these powered? Was it by springs or electricity?

Chao: Let me see, I remember carrying batteries and a hand-operated charger. We'd employ people to operate the charger.

RL: How long would it take to recharge your batteries?

Chao: An hour or so.

RL: They would have to turn a handle all that time?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Yes. [Laughter] Then after the wax cylinder, you used wire.

Chao: Wire, very briefly; we quickly changed to discs. At first, there were only aluminum discs, not coated, and some of the

Chao: earlier discs got rusted and were very, very noisy. Recently I had all the discs transferred to tape again, but not until they were somewhat rusted; so they're rather noisy.

In fact, that recording of Chang Hsüeh-liang's voice when he kidnapped Chiang Kai-shek in Sian [city]--I recorded his voice in Nanking and that was on an aluminum disc. Now, when it's transferred to tape, it sounds very scratchy.

RL: You recorded it from the radio, did you?

Chao: From the radio, yes.

RL: What was your reaction to the news?

Chao: People were upset. I was in Shanghai, and everybody thought it was the "mosquito" newspapers that created the rumor, but when we went back to Nanking, we found that the news was true; I was able to record Chang Hsüeh-liang's voice. I remember he said, "Wo Hsiao-liang"; in his dialect--northeastern dialect--he pronounced his name Hsiao-liang. And there was a big celebration after the release of the Generalissimo.

Schneider: Excuse me, but what is a"mosquito" newspaper? [Laughter]

Chao: A small newspaper that usually put in a lot of sensational--

Schneider: Tabloid.

Chao: Tabloid, yes.

Schneider: I take it that you have tried to save your discs and recordings from those days?

Chao: Yes. All the old discs have been transferred to tape.

Schneider: Do you have any of the original recording equipment as well?

Chao: I'm not sure; there may be some in Taiwan. I don't remember.

RL: After the aluminum discs, then you went to the regular--

Chao: Coated discs. The coated disc could keep, unless you played them too often. After the coated disc, we have been using tape all the time.

Schneider: Technically, the coated disc is of what constitution?

Chao: Some sort of material that prevents most scratches, very little actual noise. I've forgotten what the material is on the aluminum.

Schneider: So it's aluminum coated with something.

Chao: Yes. Now there is a problem of preservation of sound archives because the coated discs won't last forever if you play them, and the tape will also deteriorate after a certain time--a number of years. To prolong the thing, you have to re-record from the coated disc once after a number of years. Still, that wouldn't last forever; so theoretically, there's a limit to that even.

The only really permanent recording would be to take down the sound waves from one of the recordings and have the formula preserved, and then reconstruct the sound waves from the formula. But no practical technique has yet been invented for doing that.

Methods

RL: Did you have assistance in your dialect studies?

Chao: Yes, a lot of assistance.

RL: About how large would your team have been?

Chao: In Hupeh, the survey of Hupeh, we had three. Usually one or two. Yang Shih-feng, who was my teaching assistant at Tsinghua [university] back in the 1920s (now in Academia Sinica) has been with me the longest. He's still working on his survey of the Szechuan dialect or dialects. [Published since.]

RL: Were some of your assistants your students?

Chao: Yes, some were my students; some were graduates from other universities who would be called in to assist me in the institute.

RL: Was this considered part of their academic curriculum?

Chao: Yes. It would be something similar to an instructorship.

RL: You mentioned several times the problem of choosing your informants. I would like to hear more about that, and perhaps you could tell me what sort of material you encouraged them to speak. Was it everyday conversational, or did you try to be (as you, I think, suggested) encyclopedic and cover all the possible sounds in the dialect?

Chao: I think most of the--practically all of our informants were literate, so it was possible to give them a list of the characters. If they would say they didn't know that character, we'd explain the meaning and see if he could pronounce something which sounded plausibly like the pronunciation of that character.

We usually asked them to tell the story of "The North Wind and the Sun," giving the Mandarin version or the classical version of the story so as to have connected speech.

RL: Is that a well-known folk tale?

Chao: It's used very much in China by dialect students.

Schneider: Why is it used?

Chao: I suppose because it's used in Le Maître Phonetique a good deal, the British journal of phonetics. I think they have modernized their name. It's called the Journal of the International Phonetic Association now, and it's printed in ordinary orthography; all the articles used to be printed in the IPA [International Phonetic Alphabet] notation.

RL: This was then an international technique?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Does anybody know which country the story originated in?

Chao: I thought it was a Greek story. I don't remember.

RL: How long did you normally spend on one of your study trips?

Chao: It depended; usually I would spend a month or two. Of course, going to the southwest took longer--Kwantung and Kwangsi.

RL: Again, to ask a very concrete sort of question, what sort of physical bulk of material did a trip like that result in, when you were using wax cylinders?

Chao: Besides my own baggage, I think I would have three or four boxes of things, so I usually had help to move things along.

RL: How did you plan your trip? How did the time break down in terms of doing a study of this sort? How much preliminary work would you do before arriving in the area, and what would you do actually in the area, and how much time would it take you to produce the study from the materials you collected?

Chao: It took at least several months before we felt ready to go on one of these trips. After coming back--well, as a matter of fact, some of the stuff still hasn't been written up; most of it has been written up; it's usually done within a year or two. After too long, I forget what my notations meant. [Laughter]

RL: How much time did you spend with your average speaker?

Chao: An hour or two. Sometimes he was asked to come more than once; after an hour or two, the speaker is usually tired.

RL: How many speakers did you require?

Chao: For one place, I would try to get at least two to compare any differences; in some places, within the same city, there will be two varieties, as in my own hometown there are two types of speech and different tone-sounding patterns too.

RL: You published something that is translated in English as "Questionnaires for Dialectal Surveys." Did these follow international usage, or were they designed or adapted by you for problems peculiar to Chinese dialects?

Chao: I did add some adaptations for purposes of transcribing Chinese dialects.

RL: We talked earlier about the Yao and Tibetan songs that you worked on. Did they have a particular place in your dialect studies?

Chao: No; they were rather separate studies. In the Yao, I was actually also studying the Chinese dialects in that region,

Chao: but in the case of the Tibetan it happened that a Tibetan in Peking knew many of those songs by heart.

RL: What was Liu Pan-nung's role in planning these studies?

Chao: He himself did some dialect surveys in the northwest, in Shanshi, I think, but he wasn't very active in the dialect studies. He was teaching in the Peking University. He was interested in phonetics and phonology. He was the first man to have made a kymograph record of the four tones of Mandarin. He got his Es-lettres in the College de France.

RL: Did you have many discussions with him on your work?

Chao: Not very much, but occasionally.

RL: What were the grounds for choosing the dialects in the order in which you studied them? I've got the order down as Kiangsu, Chekiang, Kwantung, Kwangsi, Anhwei, Kiangsi, Hunan, and Hupeh. Is that the right order?

Chao: Yes. That was really more practical convenience than any theoretical order.

RL: Nothing to do with the importance of the dialect or the population in those areas?

Chao: No.

RL: What interviewing techniques did you find particularly useful in working on your dialect studies?

Chao: Most important is to put the informant at his ease, to talk freely in his dialect. Of course, we often had to revise our list of question to ask. Occasionally, though not very often, we'd go to the same place twice after studying the first records; we'd find what we missed and add more items.

RL: Did you find that you had to change your word lists from one dialect area to another?

Chao: We occasionally found it necessary to add some items; some elements which were not relevant, we'd just skip them. Some words which were common everyday words in one dialect would be obsolete or just unknown to the speaker of another dialect.

Chao: One disadvantage we had was that we weren't able to get as many aged people to speak as we would have liked. It was usually the student class, and they were subject to later influences perhaps not so representative of the general population.

RL: Was this a problem of literacy? How would you define the difficulties in getting older people?

Chao: We just didn't find enough contacts to get those aged people to come to us. It would be useful to have illiterate people as our informants; then, of course, we couldn't give them lists of characters to read but would have to ask them as much in their dialect as possible to say certain things--"what do you call this, what do you call that?"

RL: Why do you think it was that you couldn't get in touch with these older, literate people?

Chao: Perhaps we were just in too much of a hurry to go from place to place without making preparations long enough ahead to make those contacts.

RL: When you went into a new place, how did you make your contacts?

Chao: We usually went to some office in the educational world--maybe the commissioner of education of the province.

RL: Were these people likely not to be natives of that province, to be sent from Nanking?

Chao: On the whole, in the districts, the people were mostly local people. There was an older rule--I think during the earlier dynasties--that a native of a place couldn't be mayor of that place, but I don't think that's a rule any longer.

RL: So you worked primarily through government education offices. If you could go back, what, if anything, would you do differently?

Chao: We would construct better type lists and better forms and better equipment and perhaps record more free conversation. Of course, in the case of free conversation, you'd need at least two to talk with each other.

RL: Did you know of Granet's* work on songs of ancient China?

Chao: Yes, I did follow it somewhat; I've forgotten what I got out of it. I heard some of his lectures there in France.

RL: Did you find his work helpful and impressive?

Chao: It didn't have too much to do with what I was doing. With him it was more philological.

RL: How were your studies funded?

Chao: Most of my dialect studies were part of the undertakings of Academia Sinica, the Institute of History and Philology under Academia Sinica.

RL: What was felt to be the importance of them? They must have been quite expensive, and there was a shortage of funds in general.

Chao: Yes. It was felt that that was the proper thing for a modern institution to undertake--the study of how things <u>are</u> besides how things <u>were</u>.

RL: What did you feel was the historical importance of your studies in phonetics? Was it useful, for instance, in elucidating texts?

Chao: I'm not aware that it contributed to elucidating any texts.

RL: Do you feel that there was any sort of interplay between your dialect studies and historical concerns with the political polemics that were going on?

Chao: No.

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to say about the dialect surveys?

Chao: The only thing is that still some of that hasn't been written up, although some of it was done by my successors. Like Szechuan--I didn't go to Szechuan and that still has to be done.

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*Marcel Granet, <u>Fêtes et chansons anciennes de la Chine</u>, Paris E. Leroux, 1929.

Chao: There's a lot of material collected but not written up yet.

RL: Are your records, which are not written up, in Taiwan at Academia Sinica?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Do you think somebody else could write it up from those records?

Chao: This Szechuan thing actually was surveyed by S.F. Yang who went on the trip; he's the best man to write it up. Recently he completed a series of dialect surveys of Hunan. I wrote the introduction for him on that.*

RL: I gather your wife came with you on some of these trips.

Chao: She did, yes, on some trips. She went with me to Canton; she didn't go to Kwangsi--or she didn't go all the way that time on the dialect survey; she went there later.

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*Yang Shih-feng, Report on a Survey of the Dialects of Hunan, Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taipei, 1974, vii + map + 1447 pp. + 52 maps.

VI WESTERN EXPERIENCE AND TRAVELS IN THE '20s AND '30s

Teaching and Studying at Harvard, 1921-1924

RL: Today I'd like to talk about your experience in America in the '20s and '30s.

Chao: That's quite a few years! [Laughter]

RL: In 1921 you came back to Harvard after your year in China, and you came back married. Perhaps you'd like to talk about your marriage?

Chao: We knew each other during that year I went back to China from America. While I was interpreting for Bertrand Russell, at other moments, that was the time of my courting. Buwei was running a hospital of her own. We found a lot of common interests, so we decided to get married. We were against the old tradition by which marriage is arranged by people in the family. Also, there is--as there is everywhere--elaborate ceremony; we dispensed with all ceremony and just got married. At the moment we were married, actually we were in the post office sending notices to friends.

We just moved to a place in the northeastern part of Peking. That place is still there; we visited it last year, in '73, and the house is still there, one of the few places that haven't been changed.

Two of our friends (Hu Shih, my schoolmate, and Dr. Chu Cheng, whom she calls Sister Hsiang; they were schoolmates in studying medicine) were witnesses to sign our marriage contract because our friends advised us that to make it legal, you should

Chao: have at least two witnesses, and forty cents of stamp tax. [Laughter] So that was what made it legal.

RL: It sounds very much like today's "arrangements."

Chao: Yes. We meant to simplify things; actually, we went into more complications, because after that, we wanted to invite our friends and, instead of having just one big party and being done with it, we had many small parties, although they're more enjoyable.

RL: Was your wife as progressive and outgoing then as she is now?

Chao: I think she's always been that way. She was a revolutionist at home. She had a very liberal grandfather, who was a lay Buddhist scholar; although her father and mother were more conservative, but the upper generation was liberal.

Also, in the case of my earlier engagement to a relative, I tried to break it in order to be able to marry. It was a great uncle of mine who finally broke the engagement for me. Somehow it seems that liberalism occurred by alternate generations.

RL: When you were engaged--

Chao: Oh, that was long, long before I went to America; that means before 1910, and hardly with my knowledge. Meanwhile, I wrote home from America trying to break it, but they didn't pay enough attention to what I wanted to do or what I wanted to undo.

RL: Did you find it psychologically restrictive that you had this engagement?

Chao: Yes. Although I was revolutionary-minded, somehow I felt that I was engaged and that was that. So that in my dating girlfriends, the result was a sort of reservation.

I don't know whether I told you that in the case of my wife, she was engaged before she was born, to a cousin, with the condition, of course, that the two children born would be of different sexes. [Laughter] They turned out to be of different sexes, so they were engaged.

RL: In spite of having a liberal grandfather; this was done by her parents. Did she also find it a psychological restriction on her?

Chao: I don't remember, but she had that engagement broken quite a few years before we met.

RL: So when you came back to Harvard, it was no longer as an independent scholar!

Chao: Before I actually returned to America, I wrote to the chairman of the philosophy department that I would rather spend more time learning than teaching. He said, "We need you at least to correct the papers." So I was sort of a teaching assistant, correcting papers in philosophy; that really helped me quite a lot financially to have something to do.

I was promised subsidies by the minister of education and I think by Peking University, where I'd interpreted for Russell, but those were the years of salaries owed, and they didn't pay me a thing; so it was fortunate I did get something to get along.

Then I was appointed instructor in philosophy and Chinese. I started Chinese teaching there, at the same time as Harvard was approaching the Charles Hall Foundation, which started the Harvard Yenching Institute.

RL: I'd like to know a lot more about that.

Chao: I can't tell you the details of the business arrangement, but it was a good sum of money which was enough to start an institute. Harvard had some cooperation later with the Yenching University in Peking; that's why it is called Harvard Yenching Institute. Leighton Stuart was, I think, at Yenching at that time, maybe slightly later; I don't remember exactly--about that time.

Professor J.H. Woods was most active in promoting Chinese studies, although he himself was no sinologist. He was chairman of the department. The chairman at my final examination was William Ernest Hocking.

RL: So Professor Woods was chairman of the philosophy department at Harvard.

Chao: Yes. He wanted to have things started in oriental studies.

RL: Do you know what generated his interest?

Chao: He did go into oriental philosophy, not so much Chinese though; he was mostly an historian of philosophy.

RL: It was interesting to me to see that Harvard had some Chinese studies for a short while in the nineteenth century.

Chao: Yes. It lasted a few years and then stopped until it resumed in the twentieth century.

RL: How much was Mr. Woods' interest encouraged or generated by missionary interests in China?

Chao: I don't think he had very much contact with people in the missionary field. To be sure, Yenching University was a typical missionary university in China.

RL: How would you describe a typical missionary university?

Chao: It was run under missionary funds. They made the study of the Christian religion an important part of the curriculum, although you didn't have to be a Christian in order to enter the university. I would say they were among the liberal-minded of the missionaries.

RL: Were they congregationalists?

Chao: I don't remember. Possibly, they were non-denominational, but it was a Christian missionary university.

RL: Which were the less liberal? How do you feel that the spectrum of liberal to less liberal amongst the missionary universities or institutions went in China?

Chao: In some places, like St. Johns in Shanghai, I think they put more emphasis on religion, at least they did when St. Johns was situated in Shanghai. And Soochow University. Perhaps it isn't so much the difference between different universities as between different periods of time. As time went on, they were more liberal and they put more emphasis on Chinese studies and emphasized the interpretation of one culture from the point of view of the other culture.

RL: As you're thinking about it now, when would you say the shift started to occur from less liberal to more liberal?

Chao: It was a rather gradual process; it was not until after the republican revolution--the twenties and thirties.

RL: What denomination was St. Johns?

Chao: I think it was Episcopal; I'm not sure.

RL: And Soochow?

Chao: Soochow I don't remember.

RL: How about the Catholic institutions?

Chao: The Catholic universities were more orthodox than the Protestants.

RL: Back to Professor Woods, was this virtually a one-man effort to get Chinese studies back into Harvard?

Chao: There was James Ware, although he was more involved in the academic side than the business aspect of starting the thing. When the course in Chinese first opened, I had three students of whom Professor Woods was one [laughter] and one Russian student [Roerich] and a third student, Charles Gardner (son of the prominent Gardners of Boston).

RL: What was his father known for?

Chao: He was active in things cultural in Boston.

RL: How did you handle a class of that sort--just three people?

Chao: I think I conducted the class in the usual way. Of course, in a matter of language, there are a lot of exercises.

RL: What were the students interested in?

Chao: They were interested in all aspects of the language. I approached it in the usual way by introducing them first to the spoken language and then went on to the written language, with the ultimate object of reading in the literary form in characters. This was 1921. Then in 1938, I started at Hawaii--another class--purely in the literary form.

RL: At this time, were they interested in studying classical texts?

Chao: Yes, they were, but I followed the usual procedure of starting with the colloquial first.

RL: I'm not sure that's done even to this day in some English universities, where I think they start with character studies--purely written.

Chao: Of course, there's a difference; even if you use characters only, whether you join the characters to form the modern colloquial or to form the classical. You can do it either way.

RL: Which did you do?

Chao: At first, I used the modern colloquial.

RL: At this time--1921--did you have, at least in your head, an established standard of speech?

Chao: It was in the early 1910s that there was an artificial standard of standard Mandarin, the so-called national pronunciation. But there was a strictly defined form of standard which lasted until--I don't remember exactly what year--in the early or late 1920s, when they reverted to the natural speech of Peking as the standard.

RL: So were you working with the artificial standard that was set up in 1910, or did you make your own sensible modifications of this?

Chao: I think I already started using the unmodified Peking pronunciation as the standard that was either made official or at least understood by those members of the Ministry of Education who were in favor of changing back to the natural speech of Peking. And to this day, it is still the same standard; they changed the term, called p'u-t'ung hua, which means ordinary speech. The term p'u-t'ung hua used to mean something like that blue-green undefined northern type of speech, but now they've defined it as the standard. They make the pronunciation of Peking the standard. That hasn't been changed since the 1920s, to this day; still the pronunciation of Peking is the standard.

RL: That's a tremendous achievement. You probably were the single person, I would guess, who had most influence on this; would you agree with that?

Chao: At least I've always been active in it, but as you know, the first set of records I made was in that artificial system, so I did change my mind, as others have changed theirs.

RL: You said that you used the ordinary methods of teaching Chinese, but at that time, I think there was very little teaching of Chinese to western students. Harvard was one of the places where this was pioneered. I'm interested in what texts you used.

Chao: I made up texts at first, because there wasn't a suitable elementary text for the very first beginners. It was only later that I composed texts to be published; that was quite a number of years afterwards--the Harvard series Mandarin Primer and the records to go with that.

RL: I understand that you were there teaching Chinese for two years, 1922 to 1924; is that correct?

Chao: Yes. I was at Harvard for three years but didn't teach Chinese the first year.

RL: Did you keep the same three students for two years?

Chao: Yes. [Laughter]

RL: And how much progress had they made?

Chao: They learned something. Of the three, Gardner later became a sinologist himself. I lost track of the Russian student, and Professor Woods was too busy to concentrate on Chinese.

RL: Did other people join in '23 as beginners? Did you get more students?

Chao: I don't remember; I think those were the only students. But the course was kept up afterwards when I left. I've forgotten whether students came after.

RL: Was it K.T. Mei who was your successor?

Chao: That's right, yes. He's one of the classicists opposed to the vernacular literature movement, but of course he was a thoroughly competent Chinese scholar.

RL: Do you know if he changed the method of instruction?

Chao: I think in those days I followed more or less the traditional method of explaining the text in English and translating the text, although I did put more emphasis on students reading aloud from the text.

As I was telling you, when I studied second-year German, everything was translated into English, and you hardly would hear a whole sentence of German the whole semester. The teacher himself was a born German [laughter], but he just followed the usual American custom rather than the custom they had on the continent.

RL: Going back to the funding of the Harvard Yenching, I'm not familiar with the Charles Hall Foundation; did it have other interests in Chinese studies? Do you know why they were approached?

Chao: I'm afraid I can't tell you; I haven't followed it very closely.

RL: Harvard, I think, did already have quite a considerable library, didn't it, of Chinese materials?

Chao: At that time, not too rich; it did have some. It acquired more in later years.

RL: How did you feel about the official attitude of Harvard to Chinese studies? Harvard has a reputation of being quite traditional.

Chao: I think it was well received. If it had a traditional attitude, people there probably thought that studying an ancient culture would be the right thing to do.

RL: How about the Chinese art collection, which now, of course, is a remarkable one--was that already well established?

Chao: No. My impression is that it was a little later; I wouldn't be sure. That was an independent activity.

RL: Were you ever consulted on this at all?

Chao: Only casually--not really.

RL: Were you ever asked to help in purchasing for the library?

Chao: Yes, what books to get.

RL: Did you do much of that?

Chao: No, not very much--occasionally.

RL: Then, while you were in America from 1921 to 1924, I believe that you were establishing your ties with some of the laboratories and pursuing technical studies in electronics and acoustics.

Chao: I don't remember whether it was during that period or later.

RL: Were you aware of what else was going on in Chinese studies in America at this period--Columbia, Yale, Cornell?

Chao: At Yale, there wasn't much until shortly before World War II. At Chicago, there were some classical studies, and California had Chinese studies. During my stay in 1919, I spent one semester at Berkeley, and they had Chinese studies, teaching classical Chinese. Ferdinand Lessing was teaching then.

RL: Was [E.T.] Williams here at that time, or later?

Chao: I don't remember. There was Kiang [Kang-ku]; he was one of these teachers.

RL? Would you care to make a guess at how many people were studying Chinese in American universities in the early twenties--how many students?

Chao: To make a wild guess, I would say not over one hundred altogether.

RL: Were your first two daughters born in America?

Chao: Yes, in Cambridge, Mass. They were both born in the Boston area. In '24, we went to Europe for a year, and that is why my second daughter, Nova, had her first language in French. The funny thing is that after we went back to China for a while, she forgot her French and we were all advocating the use of the

Chao: national language. When we came back to America, and she entered Radcliffe and had an American teacher teaching French, she spoke French with an American accent. [Laughter]

RL: Did she object to this?

Chao: She couldn't tell, by that time, about French.

Meetings with European Scholars, 1924-1925; Karlgren, Pelliot, Giles, and Others

RL: I'd like to talk today about your impressions of some of the scholars whom you met while you were traveling in Europe in 1924 and 1925. Perhaps we could start with Bernhard Karlgren?

Chao: I think you asked me when I first came into contact with him. It was in 1921 that I came across his magnum opus Phonologie Chinoise, and that seemed to make quite an impression. It took three of us to translate that book into Chinese. On the whole, I think the Chinese phonologists agreed with his conclusions--the reconstruction of ancient Chinese of 601 A.D.--the Chinese call that "Middle Chinese" whereas in Western usage, Middle Chinese is later and the Chinese of 601 A.D. was called ancient. But in Chinese usage, ancient meant Chou Dynasty, way back.

RL: Were there other Chinese scholars who knew of his work at this time?

Chao: In those days, those with chief interest in it were Fang-kuei Li, who is now at Taipei (one of my co-translators), and Lo Ch'ang-pei (the third translator). Ch'ien Hsüan-t'ung himself didn't read English very fluently; he knew the work more or less indirectly, although he himself was quite an authority in Chinese phonology.

Li Ch'in-hsi was active in the Unification of the Language Movement that also had interest in these things.

Schneider: Did you and Li Fang-kuei and the others who knew of Karlgren's work learn of it overseas or had the book gotten to China before you translated it?

Chao: Yes.

Schneider: So it was being circulated some time, at least, before you translated it?

Chao: I wouldn't call it "circulated" because there weren't that many copies, but yes, amongst the phonologists, we knew it and studied it carefully.

Schneider: So someone had brought it from Europe? I'm wondering how it got there; it's kind of a mystery. [Laughter]

Chao: Yes. I've forgotten the exact circumstances under which it got there; possibly he sent a copy to one of the institutions there. He had lived in Shansi province for some time. In fact, the very first time I met him, he conversed with me in Chinese with a slight Shansi accent. But when we started discussing theoretical phonology, he said, "Let's switch into English; we'll be more comfortable."

RL: Was his spoken Chinese quite good?

Chao: Yes. His accent was good--as I was saying, with a slight Shansi accent. That was in Gothenburg when I first met him, some years later after we translated his book.

RL: Just a small technical point. On the translation, in your autobiography, I think you have a publication date of 1948; in your bibliography, it appears to be 1940. Do you remember when it was actually published?

Chao: I think, because of the war, it was delayed somewhat. As a matter of fact, it was done much earlier than that. I think becuase of the war with Japan, it was quite delayed. My translation of Through the Looking Glass* was also delayed because that was when the Commercial Press was burned down

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*Tzoou Daw Jingtz Lii, Shanghai, 1938, burned during the war with Japan, republished in San Francisco, 1968, as Vol. 2 of Sayable Chinese, currently available through Spoken Language Services, Inc., Ithaca, N.Y., 1974.

Chao: entirely, during the war.

RL: Would that have been in 1938?

Chao: That was in--'37 the so-called Marco Polo incident that began the war with Japan, and '38 was when Japan invaded Shanghai.

RL: As I understand it--and I'm sure you know much more about this than I do, Larry--there was considerable controversy about Karlgren's work and its application to the dating of the Tso Chuan commentaries.

Chao: Yes. I haven't followed that very much, but there was quite a difference of opinion.

Schneider: I'm wondering if you have some feeling as to when his work on the Tso Chuan really entered into the scholarly debates in China?

Chao: I don't remember; I haven't followed that kind of study myself.

RL: What was Karlgren like?

Chao: He was very approachable, almost like a Chinese scholar.

Schneider: How do you mean?

Chao: Quiet and not very dogmatic about whatever he was saying.

RL: Do you know what turned his interest to China?

Chao: I have no idea what started his concentration on Chinese studies.

Schneider: Did he teach there at all, in the sense of holding seminars?

Chao: Yes. He was teaching at the University of Gothenburg at first. It was only later that he went to Stockholm.

Schneider: When he was in China, did he do any teaching, formally or otherwise?

Chao: I don't remember whether he did any teaching there.

Schneider: Did Chinese scholars who were interested in his specialty pay visits to him specifically to talk over problems when he was in China?

Chao: In fact, I never heard about Karlgren [laughter] when he was in China, not until he published his work.

Schneider: Do you think that might have been generally the case, that people didn't really hear about him in China until after he'd gone back and published this work?

Chao: That's right.

RL: What made you decide to translate Phonologie Chinoise?

Chao: We thought it was the first attempt at a detailed phonetic interpretation of the phonology, because most of the Chinese work on what we call "rhyme books" (actually dictionaries), were more or less on the basis of abstract sort of algebra rather than arithmetic. Karlgren would actually give you the real numerical values of the various abstract terms.

Schneider: Did it appear to you at the time that this would be a foundation to build future phonological or perhaps more general linguistic studies in China?

Chao: There was interest from another point of view in connection with the Unification of the Language Movement, and also by contact with British phoneticians. That more or less ran parallel with this interest in the phonetic values of the phonological abstract terms.

Schneider: May I ask at this point, just to get a better feeling of the problem, how generally you perceived its value in the Unification of the Language Movement?

Chao: I don't think Karlgren's work had any particular relation with the Unification Movement. In fact, many people who were active in the Unification Movement didn't concern themselves very much with ancient Chinese, although I personally believe that it would be of interest from the point of view of relating the dialects to Mandarin; a study of the systems of ancient dialects would be helpful.

Actually, some of those what we call "type lists" for dialect study were arranged according to Chinese traditional classifications: such-and-such ancient Chinese initials and rhymes would go into such-and-such modern pronunciation.

Schneider: You're suggesting that it seemed useful to you to provide some medium to get from a dialect into kuo-yü.

Chao: Yeah.

RL: In this way, you did use Karlgren's work a little bit in your dialect studies?

Chao: On the whole, for the dialect work, it was enough to use the traditional classifications of classics since we had to go into the field and ask people how they actually pronunced words without regard to theory as to how they were pronounced. Many of the people in historical phonological studies and the dialect surveys were different sets; there's some overlapping, but some were concerned only with one and some the other.

RL: How did you share the work as translators of Karlgren with C.P. Lo and Fang-kuei Li?

Chao: Fang-kuei Li translated some parts of it; I don't remember which. As for Lo, he didn't know French too well, so in some of the parts of the work, I would use--let's see, we had to use a dictaphone on wax cylinders because there were no disc recorders yet. I read the French into Chinese, and Lo would write it in more organized sentences.

RL: What a tremendous job! What nationality was Karlgren?

Chao: He was Swedish.

RL: Why did he write in French?

Chao: I think there was a tradition of French sinology with [Paul] Pelliot and others. Certainly, few people would be able to read Chinese phonology written in Swedish!

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to say about Karlgren?

Chao: That is about all I can recall, except later I tried to visit him; that was quite a few years later, in 1954, I think it was. I made an appointment to see him. He said he would be out of town on a certain day, and I thought he said he would be in town [laughter]; I went and he wasn't there.

Chao: On another occasion, going to an organizing meeting of sinologists in Copenhagen, I think it was, where many sinologists from different countries met. Karlgren was supposed to have gone, but he was sick and couldn't go there. I made a telephone call to him from there.

RL: Then you mentioned Heinitz--Wilhelm Heinitz, and this very much interested [Wolfram] Eberhard because of Heinitz' interest in what we now call ethnic music. What did you discuss with him?

Chao: I didn't talk very much with him, mostly on general problems of phonetics. I corresponded with him.

RL: Were you impressed with his laboratory at Hamburg?

Chao: It was quite a good supply of instruments. In those days, it was one of the centers of phonetic studies.

RL: Did you find his experiences or his technique valuable for the work that you were planning to do?

Chao: I think his work was more directed at description of the actual sounds of language and analyses of them. It was about that time or slightly later that people talked more about phonemics than phonetics; phonemics would be one step nearer the formation of words from sounds.

Schneider: You're suggesting that he did not attempt to make that step?

Chao: Did not, no. I think it was Daniel Jones who coined the word "phoneme" but I'm not sure.

RL: Stephen Jones?

Chao: No, Daniel Jones. Stephen Jones was strong in experimental phonetics.

RL: What did that mean at that period?

Chao: Stephen had more to do with phonetics in Heinitz' way.

RL: Where did you find the best technology?

Chao: It's hard to say. Germany and France, of course--Rousselot was

Chao: among the earliest making recordings of sound waves. Then in England; I even forget some of the names associated with the experimental work there.

There was a very free exchange of information and technique, because, after all, the several countries of northwestern Europe are only the size of a corner of the U.S.; they had fairly free exchange of information and technique.

RL: Did you find all of these people quite accessible? You say that Karlgren was accessible.

Chao: Yes, most of them were quite accessible.

RL: What about Paul Pelliot, who had such a terrible reputation?

Chao: [Laughter] He was more formal, that's true, and in his lectures even more so. I think in Europe, the lecturers really lectured more formally than in America when the professor would talk with the students.

RL: Did you have personal contact--private interviews--with Paul Pelliot?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How did you arrange this? Did you have letters of introduction?

Chao: I don't remember; I must have had, from Harvard. I think I had corresponded with him before too.

RL: You say he was formal. Mr. Eberhard described him as "the son of a butcher who looked like one." [Laughter]

Chao: I don't exactly know what that means as applied to Paul Pelliot. [Henri] Maspero was also somewhat formal, another sinologist.

Schneider: Was Maspero involved in language studies at that time?

Chao: Yes, he was doing Chinese phonology too.

Schneider: Had he done that before he began doing his historical writings, or simultaneously?

Chao: I don't remember; that was more or less a sideline.

Schneider: Was he good enough at that to warrant your attention?

Chao: I listened to his lectures for historical topics. For phonetics, I also listened to [Hubert Octave] Pernot; he was a phonetician.

Schneider: Was there some significant difference between the French and the German work at this time? Were they developing schools, as it were, moving in different directions?

Chao: I think it was in England that they started that approach from the phonemic point of view sooner than the other places. As to the sinologists who were talking about sounds and sound classes, they didn't care too much about pronouncing them exactly according to their own theory even. And it seems that it didn't matter when they brought out the point clearly; it wasn't necessary to actually pronounce the sounds as native-like sounds. Some of them probably just couldn't, like that linguist [Joseph] Vendryès; he wrote Langages, a general treatise of language. Whenever he mentioned either Greek, Latin, English, German or whatever, everything came out with a perfect French accent. [Laughter] That didn't seem to matter so long as he made his points clear.

RL: What was your impression of Herbert Giles?

Chao: I just had a glimpse of him so as to be able to tell people that I had met Herbert Giles. A grand old man at that time; of course, his work--his dictionary--is still a standard reference from many points of view.

RL: Was he pleased to meet you? Was he approachable?

Chao: I don't even remember how he received me; I cornered him just very briefly.

RL: At this time, did you know of Arthur Waley's Chinese translations? Did you meet him, by any chance?

Chao: I don't think I met him. When did I first come across his translations? I can't tell when it was--before I went to Europe or after.

RL: I'm not sure how much he actually liked meeting Chinese because he didn't speak any Chinese. He never went to China.

Schneider: Embarrassment. I know he never went. [Laughter]

"Funeral Director" of the Tsing Hua Scholarship Students in America

RL: You stayed in China till 1932 with Academia Sinica?

Chao: Yes. Then I spent one year in Washington, D.C. as director of Chinese students, of the Tsing Hua students.

RL: Why did you choose to take that particular job? Was it because you didn't want to take the presidency of Tsing Hua university?

Chao: That was at least part of the reason; I wanted to avoid administration. I wanted Mr. Y.C. Mei to take the job. But Mr. Y.C. Mei, who was director of the Chinese students in Washington, hesitated about returning to China to be president of Tsing Hua. So I offered to take his job in Washington to make him go back to be president of Tsing Hua!

RL: You yourself had been a student in America under those auspices?

Chao: That's right, yes. The first time I came to America was under the same auspices, funded by the so-called Returned Indemnity, the Boxer Indemnity Fund.

RL: I wanted to ask you some questions about that. First of all, roughly how many students were you responsible for?

Chao: By the time I was there--they called me the Funeral Director of that office there because we just wound up the thing after a year. I can't tell exactly, but I think there were less than fifty by that time.

RL: In what ways do you feel that the students of the '30s were different from your class--you were the second class--the class of 1914?

Chao: Perhaps, on the whole, in our class (the class of 1910), we had more classical training in Chinese tradition than the later students. But in outlook, I didn't notice much change.

RL: What do you think they hoped or expected from their years of study in America?

Chao: Some of them, of course, were quite ambitious and hoped to go back and rebuild the country. Most of them just enjoyed the experience and were sure that they would find interesting work when they went back.

RL: Did most of them expect to return to China, in spite of the difficult times?

Chao: I think most of them did, and in those years I think they had to, unless for special reasons you were permitted to stay as residents. It was only some years later that Chinese could become residents when they wanted to.

RL: Was this a result of the American immigration laws of that period?

Chao: Yes.

RL: It was not only built into the terms of the indemnity scholarship, then?

Chao: No.

RL: Did some of them, in fact, stay on, if not in America, in England or France?

Chao: Yes, a few; not many.

RL: As I understand, at that time, it was very difficult for Chinese to get permanent academic appointments.

Chao: Yes.

RL: Would you like to have stayed on in America at this time, do you think?

Chao: Which time?

RL: Nineteen thirty-three.

Chao: I had no idea. I was sort of on leave from Academia Sinica. Actually, I'm still on leave. [Laughter] I resigned and they didn't want me to resign.

RL: That's been quite a long leave. [Laughter] Did your students resent the immigration laws? (When I say "your students" I mean the ones you were responsible for.)

Chao: They took it for granted that it was the situation when they came.

RL: In point of fact, what did you have to do, what was your job as "funeral director" of this program?

Chao: I enjoyed traveling around. I learned to drive at that time. I'd go to the various places and vist them, and see how they were getting along with their studies.

RL: Did you have the power to send any of them home if they were in some sort of trouble?

Chao: Yes, if they were--but I never did.

RL: I've never heard of any troubles, other than occasionally emotional troubles. Was that true in your experience?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How would you describe a Chinese student of this period in an American institution?

Chao: I think he adapted himself very quickly to the ways of life of American students and mixed with American students. In some of the centers where there were more Chinese students, there would be Chinese student clubs, and there had been for quite a while the Chinese Student Alliance of different clubs all over--the eastern section, middle western section and the western section of the Alliance.

They used to publish a Chinese Students' Monthly, in which I wrote a couple of articles during the 1910s about problems of Chinese language reform.

RL: Did you write for it at all when you were director? Were you invited to write?

Chao: Let me see, I don't think I wrote anything when I was director.

RL: Was there much pressure on the students to choose majors that would be "useful" to China?

Chao: No. They were fairly free to choose what subjects they specialized in. On the whole, however, many of them did take engineering and applied sciences, but not so many the political science and economics.

RL: How about agriculture?

Chao: There were some.

RL: While you were there, I know that you visited many of your old friends at Cambridge, and you had freedom of movement because you were driving. By the way, did you have any problems in learning to drive?

Chao: I think the second day, I ran into somebody's car [laughter] although the damage was not important. On the whole, I had no problems, except once, driving from Niagara Falls back to Washington. There was a train coming and everybody in the car was asleep, and I was possibly half asleep because I hadn't noticed when that semaphore had started to swing. So I put a sudden step on the brake and stopped <u>just</u> this side of the tracks. But the car behind me, thinking I was going to cross, hit me from the back and pushed our car onto the tracks. Then the man sitting beside me, Sherman Wang, woke up and said "Go ahead, go ahead." The engine had stalled, but fortunately it did start and we passed by. It seemed just immediately after that the train came by; actually maybe it was ten or fifteen seconds. When I looked back, the car that had hit us had made a U-turn and was out of sight.

We couldn't have had time to escape because the left side was locked with baggage tied on the side and in the rear. We were not free of internal injuries after that collision, but fortunately it was only to our things, not to ourselves. We couldn't find anything, but when we got to the hotel and opened one of the suitcases, some of the spoons were bent. [Laughter]

RL: That was a very lucky escape. Did you have someone teach you to drive?

Chao: Yes. One of the secretaries at the Chinese Educational Mission--that is the office for overseeing the Chinese students--Mr. Ho, was one of my teachers. Another was Wensan Wang, a resident of Berkeley now; he's now connected with China Airlines from Taiwan.

RL: That's a frightening story. Surprising that you bent the spoons inside. I was about to ask you about what changes you noticed at Harvard and Harvard Yenching. How was their program going and how had it changed since you helped to start it in 1922?

Chao: Mr. K.T. Mei put more emphasis on teaching classical Chinese. But then, of course, as the program expanded, it would cover all the aspects, both modern and ancient. Later, during World War II, there was a big project of teaching the G.I.s modern Chinese.

RL: Was there anything at all at this period, outside Chinese language and literature--anything in Chinese history or other subjects?

Chao: Yes, there were occasional courses here and there but not on any large scale.

RL: Did you know any of the students then, and did you meet John Fairbank at this time?

Chao: He was rather later, I think. I never had the chance of having him in my class.

RL: I think perhaps by this time he was in China studying.

Linguistic Studies in America

Chao: I started going to professional meetings of linguists when I began to get interested in general linguistics, at Chicago and Yale and Brown universities.

RL: Who were the leading linguists and whom did you find most useful?

Chao: Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield, among the men who wrote books under the title of "language." [Laughter]

Chao: I enjoyed very much talking with Edward Sapir because, after an hour of conversation, he asked me a few questions about my dialect and started to talk in my dialect. [Laughter] I didn't see much of him until later. Bloomfield had a lot of influence on me, although it was mostly through his books.

Bloomfield was a rather quiet person and very modest in his ways. I think it showed also in his writing. But he was very meticulous and self-consistent in his expositions. Most of my associates at that time more or less followed his so-called structural approach to language--in other words, describing language as it is actually spoken, and writing would be an instrument from which you inferred what is spoken, rather than an object of study in itself. That is, before the days of what is now called transformational grammar. He tried to avoid the problem of meaning. The current trend in emphasizing transformational grammar is that you can get at the meaning by transferring the form of language into another--but then you have to transform them still into other forms, so it's still forms. Bloomfield's claim is that all language is the study of form.

That English word "form" is somewhat unfortunate and we have had difficulty in bringing it into Chinese because in Chinese you consider a word from the point of view of the graph, the sound and the meaning; the word "form" would seem to suggest a graph, whereas in American usage (especially in Bloomfield's school) form means sound. Form just means sound, the sound of a language.

RL: How have you tried to solve this problem?

Chao: In writing in Chinese, I would just use the word "sound" instead of "form," or a paraphrase of it in some cases.

RL: How do you feel about Bloomfield's work now, in the context of your own work and of modern--contemporary--linguistic studies?

Chao: I don't think his approach can be described as out-of-date, but it's a necessary step and an important step. Whatever you do beyond that has to come after you've found out what the forms are in the language, what the structure is. Of course, the so-called structural linguistics is the structure of the forms.

RL: Did you then use and apply their theory? Did you find it valuable to you in your Chinese dialect studies?

Chao: I did give a couple of lectures here and there.

RL: I understand that later your lectures became famous and you were very much sought-after as a lecturer.

Chao: I don't know; I enjoyed going around giving lectures. I met some of the experimental phoneticians in the country, although in those days, Europe was more ahead in the experimental study of phonetics.

There was a scheme for developing an instrument for the deaf to "hear" by looking at the spectrograph, but they didn't develop a cheap enough instrument for individuals to use.

RL: You mentioned a deaf acoustician. How did you get to know him?

Chao: That was when I was adviser to the Bell Telephone Labs; he was one of their workers there. I was able to talk with him while he looked at the pattern that came out of the spectrograph.

RL: Do you know if this work has been followed up at all?

Chao: As far as I know, they haven't developed an instrument cheap enough to be used generally.

RL: I would think that it required some very specialized abilities on the student's part. When were you an adviser to the Bell Telephone Labs?

Chao: I think it was during World War II. That was quite a bit later.

RL: As I understand, one of the reasons you were given leave to come to America at this point was that you planned to set up your own laboratory back in Nanking. What did you find that was useful in America?

Chao: At that time, because I was interested in doing dialect surveys, I was very much interested in buying recording equipment. Then they were already at the disc recorders instead of the wax cylinder recorders. When we had those coated discs, the recording

Chao: would be more permanent and also with a higher fidelity sound.

RL: What American equipment did you buy for your laboratory in Nanking?

Chao: We emphasized, of course--for purposes of the dialect survey--the equipment for recording and playing back, and reproducing, duplicating the records. I think it was the Fairchild Company which had the latest form of disc recorder. I don't think we went as far as the spectrograph in the Nanking period. We set up an acoustic lab in the Institute of History and Philology, part of the Academia Sinica; we made it soundproof.

In fact, I visited that room last year (1973); it has changed into an ordinary office. The Institute of History and Philology has been changed to an Institute of Archeology.

RL: Do you remember about how much your budget was?

Chao: I have no idea. [Laughter] We had a fairly free hand in getting what we needed.

RL: How large was the room? You saw it last year.

Chao: I think about twenty by thirty feet, with heavy drapery and double windows.

RL: Did you have storage problems there, keeping your materials under suitable conditions?

Chao: We stored them in the basement, except those we were currently using. Those recordings on aluminum discs are not subject much to weather conditions. The only thing is that each time you play it, you wear some off. Later, when the tape recorder was invented, we transferred the disc recordings onto the tapes, which wouldn't wear out from playing. On the other hand, after a certain time, the magnetization on the tape would gradually lose strength. In order to get better results, you would have to get another copy on tape from the original. And yet, if you do this, you can't do it indefinitely, because each time you duplicate, you wear out some of it. So that, theoretically, there is a limit to the length of time of keeping those recordings. The only thing that could be permanent would be to have the mathematical formulae of all the sound waves; that could be permanent.

RL: Have you worked on this problem at all?

Chao: No.

RL: When you got back to Nanking, were you able to use your equipment, or did you have to leave too soon because of the war?

Chao: We did use it for a while. Actually, I was in Washington from '32 to '33 and then spent a year in Shanghai while the building in Nanking was being prepared. From '34 to '37 the Institute was in Nanking, and we worked there and went out to field work for dialect surveys and so forth.

RL: Did you feel that the later dialect studies were effectively better because of your new equipment than the earlier ones?

Chao: That was one advantage; also, of course, we had revised some of what we call the type lists for asking information from our informants.

RL: Can you tell me what lines the important revisions followed?

Chao: You would have a more representative vocabulary to ask them what to call things, and a more representative list of single syllables to ask. One thing, which would depend on the experience of those people who went with us to ask questions, was that you had to ask them the right way for them to give the natural speech, because besides the reading pronunciation of characters, there are some features of local speech--very often the colloquial things--which wouldn't come out from looking at the characters. You have to give them the right context for use.

RL: Did you have any difficulty explaining the purpose of your work to your informants?

Chao: On the whole, it was very easy to explain it to the teachers of the students who came as informants. But students usually had the impression that somebody came to teach them, rather than to be taught by them.

RL: Did you find the ideas of Bloomfield and Sapir useful, and can you give me any examples of how they were useful in your field work?

Chao: Not so much in the field work as in general theory. At that time--'32 or '33--I first met Bernard Bloch, who was later president of the Linguistics Society. He was interested in dialect survey. In the American Linguistic Atlas, Bloch was active. And Hans Kurath was also one of the leaders of the American linguistics survey. I talked with those people about the techniques of asking information from our informants.

RL: Were they working with Indian languages?

Chao: No, primarily with American English.

RL: Did you have any discussions with people studying American Indian languages when you were here?

Chao: With Zelig Harris. That was maybe in the forties; I don't remember. Sapir was interested in American Indian languages himself. I didn't go very far into studying the American Indian languages.

The Shadows of War

RL: From the way we've been talking, it would not be apparent that China was in a state of great upheaval at this time. You mention--or your wife mentions--that you were in Shanghai in 1937 when the Japanese attacked, and could almost see where the Commercial Press was burning up. How did you feel, both personally for your losses, and as a Chinese, for the situation of the country during this period?

Chao: Of course, I was nervous about the situation in connection with the Japanese. That was the time when my translation of Through the Looking Glass was burned in Commercial Press. Later--during the Japanese occupation, I think it was--one of our Academia Sinica reports on dialects was still published. I don't know when it was--1938 or what. I think the Hupeh report was published. It was still before Pearl Harbor, so it was possible for books to be published in Shanghai.

RL: Did you foresee at all the extent of the disaster, from the Chinese point of view?

Chao: We thought serious things were going to happen, but after the 1937 attack, we thought it was really something serious. We were rather glad that the Japanese celebrated and stalled so that the Chinese government would have time to re-form and move inland gradually instead of running in disorder.

RL: As I understand, you lost all your things, except for your diary and photographs.

Chao: That's right. And later, a few books--Volumes I, II, III, IV of Chinese Science, the journal of the society we started in America.

RL: How did those survive? Where were they?

Chao: They were in Nanking, but some later-comers inland brought them for us. And two volumes of Maxwell's Electrity and Magnetism with annotations by Josiah Royce. [Laughter]

RL: It must have been hard for your friends to select from your library.

Chao: Of course. Later the whole house was burned down.

VII CAREERS IN AMERICA, 1938-1947

A Year at the University of Hawaii, 1938-1939

RL: I'm pleased to be back, and I thought today we would talk about your experience in America from 1938 until--'47 was it, when you left Harvard?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How did you choose or decide to go to Hawaii in 1938?

Chao: I'd been asked to go there before when Greg M. Sinclair of Hawaii, head of the Oriental Institute, visited Nanking and asked me to go there. I thought I couldn't leave, but he said, "Any time you change your mind, let me know." In '38, we were refugees in the southwest in Kunming and I sort of managed to do some work there, but of course that was in the midst of wartime and I couldn't do very much. I thought a year visiting might be interesting when they were developing the Oriental Institute.

RL: How was that funded?

Chao: I don't know exactly what fund it was; it was some subsidy from outside.

RL: Mr. [Edward] Schafer recalled that it was Rockefeller.

Chao: Yes, I think it was that foundation.

RL: What were the purposes of the Oriental Institute?

Chao: Being situated between the orient and the occident, they thought that was the most strategic place to start such activities. Also, over there were people of oriental origin, which helped start the study of things oriental.

But as it turned out, my impression was that it is between the orient and the occident and as far from both of them as before the days of the China Clipper. So people were very ship-conscious. Any time people came from China or Japan or people from mainland America, everybody would meet the ship and ask how things were.

RL: So you had very much the feeling of being isolated on an island?

Chao: Yes, that was the feeling, at least of those who visted there. If you were born there and lived there, of course that was the world.

RL: Did you find serious scholars there in those days?

Chao: It depends upon whom you met with. At that time, there were not too many you could carry on serious research discussions with.

RL: What were the aims of the Oriental Institute?

Chao: They were hoping to set up a comprehensive curriculum but they had problems of getting personnel. Then the next year, I left for Yale.

RL: Was this your first serious involvement in teaching Chinese to westerners since your Harvard experience in 1922 to '24?

Chao: After that, since the first teaching experience at Harvard, I was involved more or less--most of the time--in dialect survey in China. That is the first time I think I was concentrating more on teaching Chinese to westerners. Actually, as I think I've said before, it was in classical Chinese that I started things, with the idea that it was good to be prepared for a study of Chinese books or classical texts.

RL: Could you perhaps fill in for me what was available to teachers or students who wished to study Chinese?

Chao: There were not many suitable texts one could use; that is why I composed everything new. Then I felt that the way to go about

Chao: learning the language well--a living or a dead language you should teach it as if it were living. That was why I conducted the course with a lot of oral work and I even carried on conversations in the classical language.

It wasn't done in China, except for fun. In my early school days in China, children would carry on conversations in the classical language for fun, but actually nobody does that.

I also made the students write exercises in classical Chinese rather than just translating it back into English.

RL: How close--if you compared classical and modern Chinese with languages like Greek or perhaps Hebrew (classical Greek and biblical Hebrew), how close would you say classical Chinese was to modern Chinese in comparison with other such languages?

Chao: My impression is that there is at least that much distance between the two. The sentence structures are fairly close, but words are all different, including the so-called empty words (the articles and so on)--they were all different. The only difference in grammatical structure is that you would have sometimes modifying adverbial phrases after the verb more often than before the verb in classical, whereas in modern, you would have what you might call resultative complements to verbs after the verb, but most modifiers come before.

So in that respect, classical Chinese is more like western languages. You have adverbial phrases after the verb.

RL: Did you continue this method of teaching--speaking classical Chinese--or did you find your experience made you want to modify that?

Chao: I haven't had a chance to teach exclusively classical Chinese after that. Later, when I taught modern spoken Chinese, of course, that was the way it's usually taught and learned.

RL: If you were doing it now, do you think you would feel it a good idea to talk classical Chinese?

Chao: If you don't talk it, at least I would still emphasize the audio-lingual approach in studying classical Chinese, and also make students compose in it, rather than merely translating the Chinese into English.

RL: That was the way that Latin was taught, at least in England, well into the twentieth century; you had to compose Latin verse. I don't know what modern pedagogical theories are on this, if this is still felt to be an effective method of teaching a classical language.

Chao: Yes. I think that is still emphasized, the audio-lingual approach to a language, whether living or dead.

RL: But beyond the audio-lingual, whether it's necessary to write and compose in the classical language?

Chao: Yes, I think so. In other words, an active use of the language rather than merely passive understanding of it.

RL: Can you talk a bit about who the students were who were coming to Hawaii? After all, that was still the Depression.

Chao: At that time, I had only three students. No, I had three students at Harvard; in Hawaii there were more. Edward Schafer was one, and Shively--one of the Shivelys who later went into government work. What is his first name? Not the [Donald] Shively at Harvard now. I don't recall the names of the other students. I had a couple of Chinese students too.

RL: Would they have been Chinese from Hawaii?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Did you have any feeling about their motivation--what brought them--their recruitment, as you would say?

Chao: I suppose they felt that they either didn't know enough of the language of their origin, or they had only contact with the Cantonese in Hawaii and needed to have some knowledge of Mandarin, which is more commonly used in China itself.

RL: And the non-Chinese people like Schafer and Shively?

Chao: There it seems to be that they would later work in that field.

There were a lot of Hawaiians of Chinese origin who were interested in learning Mandarin, and that was the year I think when my wife had some classes in Mandarin in the city in cooperation with some other schools, not part of the university. One of my daughters also taught Mandarin there; although she had

Chao: been born in Cambridge, Mass., she went to school in China.

RL: That was Iris?

Chao: Iris, yes.

RL: How many universities in America were teaching Chinese at this period?

Chao: Berkeley has had a long history. In fact, when I was a student at Berkeley, there were already classes in Chinese in 1919.

RL: The first chair established at Berkeley was the Agassiz chair in which you, of course, held in Oriental Studies, which I think is a rather splendid thing for a young university as it was then.

Again, to put it in context, if an American wanted to study Chinese, were there relatively few places at that time?

Chao: Not many.

RL: Chicago?

Chao: Yes, I was thinking of Chicago. I don't know when it started. Creel was active there maybe a little later; I think he was already active at Chicago at that time. And Yale with George A. Kennedy, China-born Kennedy. Harvard, of course.

RL: Was there beginning to be a feeling that it was very important to teach Chinese, or had this not yet come into academic thinking?

Chao: It was usually admitted that the study of Chinese was important as a major culture, but the practical importance of it wasn't considered as much until after Pearl Harbor when it became more important and more emphasised.

RL: Was there any strong feeling yet that you needed Chinese scholars to teach Chinese rather than people like Creel and Kennedy?

Chao: I don't think especially. There was the theory that whoever was competent could do the work; it makes no difference what the origins were. In fact, George A. Kennedy himself was born in China, and his first language was one of the Wu dialects.

RL: Was he a son of a missionary?

Chao: I think so; I don't remember.

RL: Perhaps I shall ask you this question again, but I would like you, if you can, to evaluate your influence on Chinese language teaching in the west, perhaps particularly in America.

Chao: Well, I don't know. I think I more or less followed the general trend of emphasizing more and more of the modern spoken language. I wasn't the initiator of the trend. I did find more and more people interested in the way I went about teaching the language. And also, there was the general trend in teaching all foreign language as an active form, with the student taking part and using the language.

RL: I didn't find in your bibliography an account of your records* that you were using in 1938 in Hawaii.

Chao: Thirty-eight. That was before the Harvard series was recorded. I think those were temporary recordings, or possibly--I could have used possibly some of the records meant for Chinese to use.

RL: I believe that one of them is classical Chinese read in Cantonese. Do you remember that?

Chao: I don't remember. If so, it must have been some temporary recording rather than a commercially-manufactured one.

RL: I have heard it said that you expected a great deal from your "elementary" language students. In order words, the courses were too difficult?

Chao: Perhaps it depended upon the student. [Laughter] For example, in the case of Schafer, he didn't find it especially difficult to follow things; he didn't find it strange to converse in the classical language in class.

RL: What about your Chinese Hawaiian students?

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*Set of four records. 33 1/2 rpm. Cantonese Primer Lessons 1-24. Cantonese Riddles and Fake Mandarin from Cantonese Notation. In The Bancroft Library.

Chao: I don't remember how they got along, but in the case of my wife's class in town, there were mainly interested in acquiring the Mandarin pronunciation; they already knew the language as such.

RL: They spoke Cantonese.

Chao: Yes.

RL: Chinese is such an extremely difficult language for westerners that I was going to ask how did the problems of your students in studying help you in designing your language courses. Did you take input from the students?

Chao: You mean in composing the texts?

RL: Yes.

Chao: I don't think I did. I emphasized more the frequency of actual use, and put those frequently used phrases and constructions first, and then tried to make the student get into contact as much as possible with the language as it is actually used.

Teaching Chinese Music; More Thoughts on Composition

RL: Were you also teaching Chinese music?

Chao: Yes. I gave a course on the appreciation of Chinese music, and sometimes got people to sing or play some of the things. Then they found that I took it too academically rather than artistically. [Laughter]

RL: Do you mean the students or the university?

Chao: Both. Sometimes, when I discuss the theory of equal-tempered scales in old Chinese musical theory, they didn't find the subject too exciting.

RL: I had meant to ask you a question on a problem of singing in Chinese. How do you cope with the problems of tone, the tones in the spoken language when you are singing verse or songs?

Chao: In the matter of chanting poetry, you follow more or less the tonal patterns of the dialect in which you're chanting. But in

Chao: singing, there is more freedom, although I think there are articles and books even that have been written on the matching of tones with melody. But in modern colloquial verse, one usually doesn't pay too much attention to them.

I've been more or less influenced by the classical tradition of singing the first two Mandarin tones--the so-called even tones--on a low pitch or a descending pitch, whereas the other tones would have either shorter or higher tones. I've followed the Mandarin tones only in a few cases in playful, humorous songs. I haven't followed the Mandarin tones when I compose tunes to the words. I've always been rather conservative in that respect.

RL: Your daughter, Iris, commented that you had a very logical approach to music, and that if she would ask why didn't you compose in such and such a key or why did you use this note rather than that note, you would respond in certain ways, for instance, "That note on the piano isn't playing." [Laughter] Do you feel that her comment is accurate?

Chao: I think her style of comment usually puts things in more striking light than necessary. I think on the whole I put logic aside and let my feelings go in any direction they do as to tone and melody. The matter of stress is not important when the words are in the classical verse, but in modern colloquial wording, the stress should fall on the so-called full words rather than the empty words.

RL: Were you composing while you were in Hawaii?

Chao: I don't remember.

RL: Did you yourself sing for the class?

Chao: Yes, for some of the illustrations, I sang casually.

RL: Is there any loss of clarity of meaning in modern colloquial songs when the melody is freed? Are there possibilities of ambiguity if you don't have the spoken tones clearly reflected in the music?

Chao: Yes, there is some, but those who are used to hearing Chinese songs would be able to at least distinguish the so-called even and oblique tones; if the melody is made to fit the tones of the words, that helps some. Singing is less intelligible. Well,

Chao: even for non-tonal languages like English, to me, a verse sung is much less intelligible than one read, because you don't have the sentence intonation, even though the matter of stress is very much stressed in musical composition in English.

RL: How have the communists coped with this problem? I have a lot of music on tape, but not knowing Chinese I'm not competent to judge how intelligible, for instance, is "The East is Red" or modern operas. How have they coped with the problem of matching the music to the words?

Chao: Apart from operas in the traditional form in which it's not intelligible anyway [laughter] unless you know the story and the context. For popular songs, it depends upon the context, I suppose the syntactic words would be mostly polysyllabic, and that helps. That is why it's possible for romanized texts without tones to be read, if it isn't too technical, if only the common words are used.

RL: How do you like the music of the last twenty years or so that's been coming out of China?

Chao: My impression is that it's not very original but most of it is in good taste.

I felt much better after the year in Hawaii.

RL: Is there anything else you'd like to tell about that year there?

Chao: It somehow gave me the impression of a place where it's a holiday every day, and I made a point of going to the beach on New Year's Day; it was warm enough for going to the beach. But Hawaii is not a stimulating working place, as say Berkeley is, where there's no summer or winter but it has up and downs; some change in temperature is stimulating, whereas Hawaii seems to be in a thermostat all the time.

RL: I know what you mean, even after one summer.

Chao: Well, one year is the same as one summer. [Laughter]

Yale and the Yale Linguistic Club

RL: What made you decide to go to Yale?

Chao: Yale, at that time, was quite a linguistic center. I'd been corresponding with people there--[Edgar Howard] Sturtevant and [Franklin] Edgerton in Far Eastern Studies, and Kennedy himself, the sinologist. As a matter of fact, I don't remember the history exactly, but anyway, the Yale Linguistic Club was quite a center in those days, and people from New York and Boston and even Chicago would go to Yale for some of the regular linguistic club meetings once a month.

RL: What were the central issues that were engaging you and that were discussed in the Yale Linguistic Club?

Chao: Usually, it's somebody who would read a paper--very often a description of some language--there was usually dinner before that followed by the paper and discussions. Then we'd go to a place--Hofbrau I think it was called, and we'd continue the discussion on a more informal basis.

The first time I read a paper there was on the Foochow dialect, the capital of Fukien province. That's the province opposite Taiwan, of which the dialect in Taiwan is a variety, the southern variety. The Foochow dialect is interesting in that you practically never use the sound of a word in context that you pronounce singly when you get words together. They get very much mixed up, and there's a question of what constitutes one sound. You see, one sound has two meanings--one kind of sound and one unit of sound--and both problems are involved. It illustrates beautifully some of the questions in these respects with languages, but with more cases of those in Foochow dialect than anywhere else.

RL: Can you give an illustration of that in English.

Chao: In English, suppose you have the so-called phoneme "t" and in certain positions in American English it sounds very weak and sort of a fluttered sound as in B-e-t-t-y, Betty, where it's even weaker than the regular "d." Yet, you consider that sound with ordinary "t" as in the word "tea," it belongs to the same phoneme. Now this sort of thing happens all the time with practically every consonant in the Foochow dialect.

RL: How was this received by the Linguistic Club?

Chao: They were used to the idea of such changes, although the data themselves were new to most of them; they seemed to be interested in further illustrations of many problems already met with.

RL: Were you teaching at this time?

Chao: I was teaching at Yale at that time. I gave a course, I think, Chinese dialectology, if I remember right, and also regular modern Chinese. I don't remember all the courses. I was there for two years.

RL: Were there other Sinologists besides Kennedy you want to talk about?

Chao: I think he was the only other one specializing in Chinese studies. The other linguists were interested in other languages.

RL: About how many students do you remember were involved in this program?

Chao: In what program?

RL: Chinese studies at Yale.

Chao: Not very many, slightly more than at Hawaii, but still there were just a handful.

Harvard and the Dictionary Project

RL: Then in 1941 you went to Harvard. How did that come about?

Chao: They were having a big dictionary project and they wanted people to help. One day George Kennedy came to see me and said, "Chao, you're all fixed." And the Harvard people asked me, "Being a Harvard man, why do you stay at Yale?" [Laughter] However, that project wasn't my idea at all.

They used cuttings from secondary sources filling a big room. James R. Ware was more or less in charge of the thing, although [Serge] Elisséeff himself was the head of it. There was another

Chao: Russian worker there--Serge Polevoy. The main source was P'ei wen yun fü which is itself a secondary source. So I wasn't too much interested.

One of your questions was "What was done with the materials?" Actually, not very much was done. Shortly after the dictionary project began, the war started. Then there was another interruption--my war work--teaching of the G.I.s there. Other than what I did with modern Chinese in the form of that Concise Dictionary of Spoken Chinese* nothing else was published except for a short article, and the cuttings were all secondary sources. I don't remember what they did with that; in any case, there was no biographical or other material of real importance for research purposes.

RL: Whose idea was the dictionary originally?

Chao: Elisséeff and James Ware. Elisséeff was the chairman, although his own field is Japan--he's a Japanologist. Ware, is the Sinologist. They had it started before I went. I was at Yale at that time. I can't report much about the way that project was concluded--if you could call it concluded--wound up.

RL: What was your opinion at the time, do you recall, of the value of the project?

Chao: I was somewhat lukewarm because of the fact that they didn't concern themselves with going to the real sources--that is, going to the texts. Personally, I was mostly interested in the language as it is actually spoken and written on contemporary themes. My interim report, in the form of that concise dictionary, was what I had collected, and it was mainly concerned with the spoken form but also the contemporary use of the written language.

RL: Many younger Chinese scholars--people like Larry Schneider, for instance--were not aware of the Harvard dictionary project, and I think it's an interesting episode in the development of Chinese studies in the west, perhaps a negative example of what ought to be or could be done. I had heard that it was designed to fulfill the function in Chinese studies that the big Oxford English Dictionary fills in English. Is that correct?

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*In collaboration with Lien-sheng Yang, Harvard University Press, 1961.

Chao: It was somewhat ambitious. However, as you know, the Oxford dictionary was based on sources rather than on other secondary material.

RL: But was this really an attempt to duplicate the position of the Oxford dictionary, and if so, why did they go for secondary materials and not the original texts?

Chao: I suppose they thought that the P'ei wen yun fü--that main source--was considered in China a big collection. It was quite a dictionary itself, on a large scope, and they thought it would cover most of what they needed.

RL: Precisely what was the methodology as it was set up by Elisséeff and Ware?

Chao: It was just translating.

RL: Translating what?

Chao: The cuttings from that Chinese dictionary.

RL: When was the Chinese dictionary produced? What period?

Chao: I can't say right away; I have to look it up.

RL: How were they going to cope with the problem of what one would describe as alphabetization in English? Were they going to follow conventional Chinese methods of listing the characters?

Chao: As far as I can remember, they were going to follow the usual order of the radicals, arranging them in the usual way. That was a mechanical question; always they'd be indexed according to phonetics--that is, according to the pronunciation in Mandarin.

RL: Were they planning three levels--the characters, romanization and English?

Chao: I don't think they were planning to have any index from the Chinese into English.

RL: But in the body of the dictionary, would they have used, do you think, a character and then a romanization and then English?

Chao: Yes.

RL: How large a staff was there?

Chao: There was one full-time man--Polevoy--a Russian. There was one other, Mrs. [Tamara] Mackentire, I think. I was doing part-time teaching myself, so it wasn't exactly full-time. That was about all, other than Elisséeff and Ware, who were not actually giving many hours to the work.

RL: Who had prepared all the cuttings?

Chao: I don't remember; that was quite long ago.

RL: If you had designed the project, how would you have set about it?

Chao: I would have taken representative literature and cut out from those. Of course, it would have taken a scholar and linguist to judge what to cut from actual sources. That would really have been a big work.

RL: In other words, perhaps you would have followed the philosophy--as I understand it--of the third edition of Webster, a usage dictionary rather than a grammatically correct one.

Chao: Yes.

RL: Perhaps you already answered this question, what caused the eventual abandonment of the project?

Chao: I think it was mostly the war duties and the demands on the department.

RL: I thought it was still going after World War II. Wasn't Yang Lien-sheng working on it for some time after the war?

Chao: He cooperated with me in connection with that Concise Dictionary for the modern part of it, but that's a small part, and he wasn't especially concerned with that; he had more to do teaching the regular courses.

RL: How do you feel about it now? Do you regret the time you spent on it?

Chao: I didn't really spend too much time. [Laughter]

RL: When you chose to go to Harvard in 1941, what made you decide to go there?

Chao: Well, of course I'd been at Harvard, both as a student and as a teacher; I'd been at Harvard twice and I liked the place, and my old friends were there. A joke to me was, "Being a Harvard man, why do you want to stay at Yale?" [Laughter]

Although in some ways, there were more things going on at Yale which were nearer the kind of work I was interested in--that is, more linguists at Yale. After I went to Harvard, I continued going to those monthly meetings of the Linguistic Club, to which various linguists from other institutions went once a month or so.

RL: Did you have a permanent position at Harvard growing out of this project?

Chao: It was understood to be not formally permanent but as long as I was interested in the work.

U.S. Army Chinese Language School at Harvard

Chao: After Pearl Harbor, the Army set up language schools at Harvard. Edwin Reischauer was in charge of the Japanese part and I was asked to do the Chinese part. They knew that I was interested in teaching the spoken language. It was a very intensive course.

RL: What do you mean, in this context, by "very intensive"?

Chao: It was theoretically two-thirds language and one-third culture and other things about the Far East. But in fact, the students as well as the teachers, gave most of the time to the language part of it. Since they were intended to be sent to the Far East after the end of the course, they were given intensive drills in the active use of the language as spoken. They were not taught so many characters but they were given the romanized form of the speech, and only toward the end of the course were they taught a very few everyday characters they might come across.

But, in fact, toward the end of the course, some of the more enterprising students started to learn more characters than they were required, and they ended up editing a Chinese newspaper called Ta Szu Pao. There was--there still is--a Chinese newspaper called Ta Kung Pao, The Great Public, and this can be translated as The Great Private. [Laughter] That seems to have been the only newspaper in Chinese completely edited by Americans. To be sure, it was only mimeographed sheets.

RL: How often did they put this out?

Chao: I think more frequently than once a week; I don't remember. Ta Kung Pao--The Great Public--has been a daily, but I don't think they turned it out every day--maybe a couple of times a week. I don't know exactly.

RL: In characters?

Chao: Yes, in characters.

RL: That's a great achievement. Did you help with it at all?

Chao: No, hardly at all. If they asked something, I would answer them, but I didn't edit anything--I let them do it.

RL: Do you remember roughly how many class hours they worked?

Chao: During the day, they would have probably six hours a day. Then there would be socials at which everybody would try to practice the language. It was really full time.

RL: Did you have weekly tests?

Chao: We did have--I think more often than weekly. As a matter of fact, in the actual exercises, they were being tested all the time.

RL: Do you know how the students were selected? Did you have anything to do with that?

Chao: No. They were just sent from various places. At the end of it, they were supposed to be sent to the Far East, but in fact, some of them were sent to Europe and, of course, would forget what they had learned. But the majority of them were sent to the places they were meant to be sent to. I think I said that some of them turned out to be leading Sinologists or Japanologists. One of them went to China, and at the end of the war he entered a Chinese college in Nanking and married a Chinese wife.

RL: Who was that?

Chao: That was Frederick Wade Mote. I cited the middle name--W-a-d-e--because in the system we were teaching (the national romanization) we were opposed to the commonly used Wade [Giles] system, and he had the middle name Wade. [Laughter]

RL: What other scholars can you remember who were students in this program?

Chao: James Crump. I think he's still chairman of the Chinese Department at Ann Arbor, I think it is. Mote is at Princeton. One of the best students--Gerald Stryker--usually came out on top in the examinations and later became head of the Voice of America and often did broadcasting to China in Chinese.

RL: Did any of them, to your knowledge, go into the state department?

Chao: Yes. I don't remember the names.

RL: Of course, it rapidly became a very difficult place for China experts. How large a staff did you have to assist you in teaching?

Chao: I think there were about half a dozen--more than that--nearly ten. I had two daughters assisting, a boy from M.I.T. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology]--two boys from M.I.T., both of whom became my sons-in-law. [Laughter]

RL: Which daughters were they?

Chao: My first and second--Iris and Nova.

RL: And the sons-in-law? Was it Mr. Pian?

Chao: Yes. He spells it P-i-a-n, Theodore Pian. The other is Huang, P.Y. Huang; he has no American name.

RL: I can tell how you recruited your daughters, but how did you recruit the rest of your staff?

Chao: I suppose mostly according to their practical knowledge of standard Mandarin.

RL: You mentioned socials. Did your wife take a large part in helping you with these?

Chao: Occasionally but not all the time.

RL: What sort of structure did these have?

Chao: They were rather informal and not the whole class all the time. They were casual group meetings.

RL: How long was the course?

Chao: I think about eight months as far as I can remember. There were two classes; they overlapped a little over a year--1943 to '44.

RL: About how many students in each class?

Chao: I can't tell off hand; I think less than a hundred.

RL: So you had roughly a ratio of one to ten, teacher-student ratio?

Chao: Yes.

RL: When the students had graduated, how competent do you feel that the average student was--not somebody like Mote, for instance?

Chao: They could speak comfortably on everyday subjects, but of course not on technical, scientific subjects. They wouldn't know the terminology in various technical subjects, but they could be understood very well and communicate comfortably in everyday subjects.

RL: Then they went to work as interpreters and so on?

Chao: Some of them did, yes.

RL: I'm more familiar with the Japanese language program. Some of them were thrown right out onto operational shifts and put to monitoring radio broadcasts. Of course, that was a different situation. China was a friendly power. How would you compare the Chinese program with the Japanese programs that you were aware of?

Chao: My impression is that students at first found the Japanese easier. They could use the kana and they didn't have to bother with tones. But at a later stage, they had more to do with the Japanese grammar, which is more complicated than spoken Mandarin.

The difficulty with tones really is psychological rather than linguistic because once they're convinced that tones are part of the word and remember to use it--otherwise it wouldn't be the same word--once that attitude is acquired there is no difficulty imitating the tones. I think in only one case, in a course here at U.C., a student just couldn't imitate the tones. If you said "ar" he'd say "ah" [different pitch]; he was pitch-blind, or pitch-deaf.

RL: So from your experience, would you say that pitch-deafness is a very rare occurrence?

Chao: Very rare, yes. It's the pitch consciousness that you can teach them so they feel that that's part of the word.

RL: Would you think that pitch-deafness is more of a psychological construct than--

Chao: In that particular case--that was the only case I met with. There may be something physiological; I don't know.

RL: I remember the students of Japanese complained of the different forms of address to the people of different rank that they were taught in a great deal of detail. Did you have any of this sort of thing?

Chao: There are some degrees of politeness and so forth, but it's not nearly so complicated as in Japanese.

RL: Did you attempt to include this in your course?

Chao: Yes. For example, the everyday word for "you" is ni, and the polite form is nin with a final "n" added. That's about all. There is a polite form for the third person, but that's rare.

RL: Did you have any contact with other service programs teaching Chinese? You were teaching for the army. Navy programs, for instance--did they consult with you at all?

Chao: Occasionally, on some specific questions, but on the whole we didn't have close relations.

RL: Do you think it should have been a bigger program, or do you think it was too large? If there were about two hundred students in your program and there were other programs going on for other services, would you feel that this was about the right number?

Chao: For the need?

RL: Yes.

Chao: I have no idea.

RL: Typically, the need is perceived and then there's a lag before

RL: the program starts, and then there is an overproduction of specialists, the result of bureaucratic inertia. Do you feel that there was over-production?

Chao: Apparently not.

It was on the basis of those courses that I wrote my Cantonese Primer and Mandarin Primer. Few people know that the Mandarin Primer was a translation from my Cantonese Primer. [Laughter] At first the U.S. government thought they'd be landing first from the south so they started by asking me to teach Cantonese.

Consultant to Bell and General Electric Laboratories: Breaking a Japanese Code

RL: You've mentioned in passing your work with some laboratories during the war. Could you tell me more about that?

Chao: I had always been interested in experimental phonetics. There were some important developments in practical acoustics as applied to language. So, I went to the Bell Telephone Labs as consultant on matters of language and phonetics. They were developing a scheme which would be useful for visual perception of sound.

There was one scientist (I think he was in the Bell Telephone Labs) who was deaf and who learned later to talk by looking at the pattern produced by the spectrograph. He would converse with people by looking at the pattern that the other person produced--something he couldn't have done with the old-fashioned kymograph.

RL: Did these studies have application to war work?

Chao: It was useful for communications--for recording and transmission of speech. I went rather regularly to Murray Hill lab or the Bell Telephone labs.

Related to that was the statistics of the occurrence of kinds of sounds, and that contributed to the final breaking of the secret [Japanese] code. In fact, the chief workers on that scheme on breaking that code didn't know a thing about the Japanese language. It was purely on statistical principles, because languages have

Chao: certain characteristic relations of different frequencies over currents--not the acoustic frequency but frequency of occurrence of various sounds. I was only on the sideline of that project.

RL: That's an extremely exciting story. Was this intercepted radio broadcasts?

Chao: Yes, that's right.

RL: I suppose you needed a security clearance for this work.

Chao: Yes.

RL: So that's what Bell was doing. What about G.E.?

Chao: G.E. was more directly concerned with acoustics as such rather than application to language. They were less concerned; they did some of it but not as much as Bell Telephone.

RL: I don't see the commercial application of this. Was this work that was funded by the government because they had the facilities?

Chao: I think so.

RL: Or did the companies hope to make commercial application of their research discoveries?

Chao: Of course, in those large companies, there are always things going on which they didn't anticipate, with application in the near future, possible future and later application.

RL: Did you work as a consultant for any other laboratories?

Chao: I can't remember. I carried on correspondence with people in England, but I think that was later.

RL: Did you find this helpful in your own work?

Chao: I've written a few articles on the things, but I was mostly interested in the grammatical analysis and recording of dialects, and we rarely had need to go into the acoustic details.

UNESCO Work

RL: When the Army Language school closed, what was your main responsibility at Harvard?

Chao: I was concerned for some time with the activities of UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization]. I went to Europe for some meetings. I was in charge of a seminar for one summer in Garden City, New York, in the east of New York state. And the American government was inviting some Chinese scholars over, and I was concerned with making contacts for them.

RL: Did you feel these seminars were valuable?

Chao: Yes. It was good because the people from various places attended and there were various seminars going on. They exchanged notes about areas of science, education and culture.

RL: Were you connected at all with the translation project?

Chao: Not specifically.

RL: Can you describe the focus of any of the seminars that you thought particularly valuable?

Chao: I think the most valuable part was really the personal exchanges, the people from different countries and the social contacts of those people were just as valuable as the regular formal meetings.

RL: Were there many Chinese representatives?

Chao: Not many.

RL: Could you have stayed at Harvard if you'd wished to?

Chao: Yes. Actually, I stopped the work at Harvard the year before because I was administrator of this UNESCO committee and other things--I was responsible for conferences--in Europe in '46. I came to Berkeley in '47. However, I did express a wish to go back to China occasionally to Elisséeff. When the war stopped in '45, he said, "Well now that the war is stopped, you may do as you wish." I thought that was enough hint at the time.

RL: When I saw Yang Lien-sheng, he said that it was very difficult for

RL: Chinese to get regular tenure appointments in the forties and that, in fact, he was the first Chinese to get a tenure appointment at Harvard. Could you have stayed at Harvard on the regular ladder in a tenure position?

Chao: I don't know. [Laughter] Yang is now a chair professor.

Co-author with Buwei Yang Chao

RL: Your wife's books were always a great pleasure to me. Can you tell me a little bit about how you worked with her on them? I'm thinking of Autobiography of a Chinese Woman* and How to Cook and Eat in Chinese.**

Chao: That How to Cook was translated by my daughter, Iris. She would complain sometimes, "Daddy, you have so many footnotes. Somebody will think that you translated the book," not that she was the translator. She was very busy at that time, the time of her final examinations. I did the autobiography, and recently the unpublished manuscript of "A Family of Chaos."*** That starts from the year of our marriage down to the present time.

RL: What is your collaborative working method?

Chao: Actually, she just gives me her manuscript and I ask her questions about things--how to do certain things or what she meant by certain things.

RL: So she writes in Chinese?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Do you sometimes wish to make substantial revisions?

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*Buwei Yang Chao, Autobiography of a Chinese Woman, John Day Company, New York, 1947, later Greenwood Press.

**Buwei Yang Chao, How to Cook and Eat in Chinese, John Day Company, New York, 1945.

***op. cit.

Chao: If it's something about my experience, I might add, "This is what I remember."

RL: Does she ever criticize your English?

Chao: On the whole, she doesn't do that very much, except when I have questions to ask her; then she'll give her opinions.

RL: She has a wonderfully readable style. What is her Chinese style like?

Chao: It's written in the colloquial with some influence from the classical. When you write down characters on paper, the tendency is to draw--because you were trained in classical language at first, there is always a tendency to write in classical style, which is more brief, you see, unless the text is meant to teach spoken Chinese, for instance, we just let it go at that.

RL: Would much younger people, who have not been educated in the classical style, have any difficulty in reading it?

Chao: I don't think they would because people, even now in China, when they write with characters don't have to do it exactly the way it's spoken, which usually takes more syllables and more characters.

RL: What sort of reception did the first two books have when they were published in the forties?

Chao: The cookbook had a great reception and I don't remember how many editions. The autobiography was published and they anticipated it would be a best seller, but unfortunately it came out at the time of Roosevelt's death, I think. Originally it was published by John Day, now it's taken up by Greenwood Press. The cookbook is also originally by John Day and now by Random House. They put out a paper edition--Vintage Books. Quite recently, she has something else--How to Order and Eat in Chinese.*

RL: I'm looking forward to that very much.

Chao: You haven't got a copy yet? We have some extra copies and I'll make a note to be sure to send you one.

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*Random House, Vintage Books, 1974.

Professors Y.R. Chao and Fu T'ung welcoming Bertrand Russell and Dora Black at Peking University, 1920. From left to right: Fu T'ung, Russell, Black, Chao.

By Sun Yat-sen's mausoleum in Nanking, 1930s

With Eleanor Roosevelt at UNESCO Seminar, Garden City, New York - 1946.

The Chao Family, Cambridge, Massachusetts - 1940s. From left to right: Bella, Mrs. Chao, Lensey, Iris, Nova, Mr. Chao.

Mrs. Chao, selecting photographs for the memoir - May, 1977.

Mr. and Mrs. Chao in Germany 1950s.

VIII THE BERKELEY YEARS, 1947-

A Quick Appointment

RL: Thank you for coming again, Larry. Perhaps we could start where we left off last time--the end of your period at Harvard. Was the presidency of the University of Nanking offered to you?

Chao: Yes, and I was scared away.

RL: But when you left Harvard, did you intend to go all the way through to China?

Chao: Yes.

RL: What happened to change your mind?

Chao: That was the main thing--they wanted me to do administrative work. During those days, everybody had to work hard and, hence there were frightful difficulties. The only way is to stay away.

RL: Were you aware of other possibilities than the presidency of Nanking University when you left Harvard?

Chao: I was interested in the University of California, and they told me, "If you can't come this time, any time you change your mind, let us know." I was at Ann Arbor, Michigan, that summer when the message from Nanking came. So I wrote to [Peter A.] Boodberg saying, "I've changed my mind; have you changed yours?" He said, "No." I got a letter from him and a

Chao: telegram from the vice president [Monroe E.] Deutsch, and that was that.

RL: So in those days, it was just as simple as that. You didn't have to go through a committee?

Chao: I suppose there were formalities that they went through as usual, but since that was already in the previous records, probably they passed it very quickly.

Berkeley Colleagues: Peter Boodberg, Ferdinand Lessing, Chen Shih-hsiang

RL: I don't think Boodberg's name has come up in our interviews. Perhaps you could tell us something about how you knew him and what you thought of him.

Chao: I knew him when he was a visiting scholar occasionally to help with the [Harvard] dictionary project. He wasn't there very long, but only for short visits. I found him really a Chinese scholar interested primarily in classical Chinese. He hardly spoke Chinese, but he was a very good scholar--better than many Chinese scholars. Very well read. He came to America on a Chinese passport. He was from somewhere in the northeast.

RL: Harbin?

Chao: Yes. Since there had been that change-over in Russia, he couldn't get a regular passport from there.

Mrs. Boodberg was at that time already a naturalized French citizen. He came here. He didn't particularly want to be naturalized as an American citizen, so he still had his Chinese status before he died.

RL: That's funny, because I heard for years that he had a Czarist passport which he would never give up.

Chao: He may have carried that, but he didn't use it in entering this country.

RL: He was technically a Chinese citizen, was he?

Chao: Yes. [Laughter]

RL: From looking at his biography, it seems that he did all his training at Berkeley, is that correct?

Chao: A good deal of it. Of course, he already had studied Chinese in Russia at an earlier time. [University of Vladivostok]

RL: Do you know what first interested him in Chinese studies?

Chao: I don't know. I hadn't asked him about the earliest beginnings of his Chinese studies. He was one of the best read Chinese scholars, including Chinese.

RL: Why do you think he published so little?

Chao: I think he was very critical of others, including himself, and so hesitated to publish. He had those Cedules and collections of essays which were circulated but not sold by any regular publisher.

Schneider: I would expect that publishing before the second world war was on a different order, wasn't it? In other words, people weren't expected to publish much.

Chao: They were, but not as urgently as they are now.

RL: What did you hear from your students about him as a teacher?

Chao: I think the better students all enjoyed being taught by him, but the average students found him a little abstruse and unclear and found him talking over their heads.

RL: Would you agree that he had at times a vocabulary so idiosyncratic that it was hard even for an English speaker to follow?

Chao: I suppose it's just the fact that he freely used, or even made up, words of Greek and Latin derivation, that sounded a little abstruse to the ordinary students. But they were all reasonable the way he used them.

RL: How did you feel about his technique as a translator of classical Chinese texts?

Chao: I think they are not all smooth reading, but he is very meticulous about accuracy. In that respect, he is one of the best translators of Chinese texts, although he hasn't done much with extended pieces of work.

RL: I heard that he was a wonderful story teller. Do you remember any of his stories?

Chao: I can't recall any at the moment, but I was impressed by his story telling.

RL: Did you know him? [to Schneider]

Schneider: Yes, I studied with him. I wanted to ask you about a romanization system that he developed for transcribing classical Chinese. He had not used it in the classroom when I studied with him. I understood that it was developed later. How did you feel about that transcription system, since you yourself, of course, had spent some time on one for Mandarin.

Chao: I think the fact is probably he wasn't too seriously interested in promoting that system [laughter] himself, although it is logical enough, but not meant to be completely practical, but it was logical.

Schneider: Would it have been possible to use your national romanization system for classical Chinese to do the same sorts of things?

Chao: That's meant for studying Mandarin. For the classical Chinese, the only difference between that and the usual Wade-Giles system is that the tones are implied. Otherwise, it does the same thing.

Schneider: How did Boodberg's differ then?

Chao: I think his system tries to introduce some features of historical elements.

RL: You implied something that's hard to pin down. You said that his system was logical but that he wasn't entirely serious about it. I think people sometimes felt this about Boodberg--that he was playing a serious game, but that it was a game with his studies and with his students.

Chao: In a sense, unless you're in some form of applied science, all scholarly work is a game. [Laughter] Perhaps his attitude toward it is more so than some others. Pure mathematics--what is that definition by--was it Bertrand Russell?--who was it who said, "Mathematics is the study in which nobody knows what one is talking about nor whether what one is talking about is true."

RL: Perhaps I should now ask you about [Ferdinand D.] Lessing, another of the great figures of Oriental Studies in Berkeley. Was he teaching at the time that you came, or was he working on the Mongolian dictionary full time?

Chao: He wasn't teaching much when I was there. He did give a course; I even forgot what it was. I knew him when we were living on the same street in Peking; back in the 1930s. He was less and less active after I came to Berkeley.

RL: Do you know what first led him into oriental studies?

Chao: He was in oriental studies back in the old days in Germany; I don't know how he got interested.

RL: I think he studied in Russia as well as in Germany.

Chao: Did he? I didn't know.

RL: What did you think of the Mongolian dictionary project?

Chao: I think it was an important piece of work, although I would probably have arranged it differently and introduced more ideas of linguistic analysis of original texts. But it was an important piece of work.

RL: Was he an approachable man?

Chao: Yes, he was quite approachable, although not extremely talkative. But he spoke rather fluent Chinese, as distinct from the case of Boodberg--not that Boodberg couldn't learn, but he didn't think it was necessary to learn to talk Chinese for a sinologist.

RL: What did he feel about the importance of teaching spoken Chinese language?

Chao: He felt that it was an important part, but he wasn't personally concerned with that part.

RL: In reading some of the University records, I saw that William Popper had helped re-organize the oriental languages department back in the thirties. Was he still actively interested in it?

Chao: I think by the time I came here, he was no longer active in Far Eastern studies.

RL: Did the department have any ongoing or close relationship with Near Eastern languages.

Chao: Not very much. We had separate activities, although in the Popper volume I contributed an article.

RL: Can you talk about our friend Chen Shih-hsiang?

Chao: He was very, what they call in Chinese wen-hsüeh chia--a literary man. So he was both a scholar of literature and also wrote prose and poetry in Chinese. I don't think he did very much in the field of recent colloquial verse, but he could compose classical verse very well.

I think most Chinese do believe that if you can compose the classical style verse, you can compose the colloquial better, with a deeper background.

RL: I think that Shih-hsiang felt himself very much cut off from his roots. I once asked him what poetry he was writing, and he said something which may not have been factually true, but I think had some subjective truth--"I don't write poetry; there's nobody to read it."

Chao: When he did once in a while, it's good reading.

RL: What do you think of Chairman Mao's verse?

Chao: Technically, he's a perfectly good writer in the classical style; he writes very well.

RL: Always classical?

Chao: I haven't seen any of his colloquial verse; maybe he doesn't write any colloquial verse.

Schneider: I don't know when Chen Shih-hsiang came here. Were you responsible in some way for his coming to Berkeley?

Chao: I supported some of his promotions. About his actually coming, I don't remember whether I took part in that.

RL: He was not an old student or colleague of yours from your days in China?

Chao: No.

Growth and Development of the Oriental Languages Department

Schneider: When Chen Shih-hsiang came--and again, I'm not sure precisely when in the development of the department that occurred [1945]--what changes did that represent in terms of the growth of the department?

Chao: It meant an addition of a new talent, no doubt about that. In most oriental departments, people in classical research were emphasized rather than those who can do some creative work themselves. I believe that even though linguists don't have to teach the daily drill in the foreign language to students that's being done, at least a teacher should be able to do that when he teaches the literary material of that language.

RL: So with your arrival and then Shih-hsiang's, the first major steps were taken in the modernization of the oriental languages department here?

Chao: My arrival would represent emphasis on the contemporary spoken language. But Shih-hsiang's contribution--would you call it modernization when you have somebody who emphasizes the classical language and was able to do creative work himself in that style? It's a strengthening of the teaching of language and literature.

RL: How would you see, then, the principal objectives of the oriental languages department when you came in 1947?

Chao: I think, because that was shortly after the war, people already recognized the importance of following the work of

Chao: any foreign language as a living language in various language departments. So, in general, oriental languages followed that trend too.

RL: Did this create much tension? For example, there have been tensions over definition of the roles of language departments, including English--whether they are to be service departments. In fact, I was speaking to somebody just yesterday who said, "Oriental languages is not a service department like mathematics, which exists to teach mathematics to physicists, chemists and engineers." I wonder what the mathematicians would think of that definition. [Laughter] In any case, this problem of a service department--was that faced in '47, and if so, how?

Chao: My impression was that people in the department take for granted that a department like oriental languages would perform both functions, both service and the study of oriental language and literature on its own account.

RL: Was formal linguistics taught in the department at that point, either by Mary Haas or yourself?

Chao: There was no department of linguistics yet. Occasionally some general--I don't remember if there was a course in the introduction to linguistics at that time. The earliest meeting of the linguistic institute--summer linguistic institute--was in 1951 in Berkeley. There were, of course, a number of us that were interested in general linguistic problems who gave occasional lectures.

RL: Did you also teach Cantonese here in Berkeley?

Chao: Yes. I gave regular Cantonese courses.

RL: People have said that this department, at least in the past, was--depending on your perspective--overweighted in Chinese, or very strong in Chinese, but that the Japanese side of it was weak.

Chao: It changes. On the whole, perhaps during the greater part of the time, the emphasis was more on Chinese than on Japanese.

RL: How did this come about?

Chao: For one thing, Lessing was more prominent in the Chinese field. Yoshi Kuno--that was way back in the 1920s, I think--was one of

Chao: the few Japanese teachers. It makes a difference whether you have a good representation of scholars from the different fields.

RL: Was there opposition within the department to increasing the Japanese side of the faculty?

Chao: No, not that I know of.

RL: How about the students? I remember the numbers were still very, very small at institutions such as Cambridge University. What was the student body like when you came in '47?

Chao: Those who did take courses in the oriental languages were usually active and interested, because they were not required to take it for their language requirement. There were a few students of Cantonese origin whose native language was some form of Cantonese, that wanted to learn Mandarin. Or even in the Cantonese course I gave there were some who speak the commonly used form of Cantonese (Sei yap), who wanted to learn standard Cantonese. There were occasional proposals to set up special courses for them, but they didn't want to be segregated. On the whole, they took courses with the other--what they call in Hawaii--the Haolis. [Laughter]

There are advantages and disadvantages in the integrated form for Chinese courses. On the whole, the interest was integrated.

RL: Which form would you have preferred?

Chao: I think it would have depended upon the number of people concerned. If there had been a large group, all speakers of Sei yap who wanted to learn standard Cantonese or to learn Mandarin, a course specially designed for them would be more efficient than those addressed to non-speakers of any form of Chinese. So far, that didn't appear necessary.

RL: A complete reversal in the late sixties--we had requests from some people for segregated courses--Asian studies, Black studies, etcetera. But in the forties, was this resented by the students--the idea that they should be set aside, or by the faculty?

Chao: I think the students didn't want to be separated.

RL: I read in the University's centennial volume* that by 1968, twenty-two Ph.D.s had been granted in oriental languages, and I did hear at times that the requirements were so rigorous that it was "almost impossible" to get a Ph.D. Did you feel that the requirements were excessively rigorous?

Chao: They were fairly rigorous, but other departments also had pretty rigorous requirements. In other language departments, they required a good background in Greek and Latin and some other foreign languages in addition to the field of concentration.

Schneider: Was there one person more than another in the oriental language department who was responsible for these requirements?

Chao: Usually they were designed from discussion, at special departmental committee meetings.

RL: I believe that there used to be three oriental languages and two European languages, in addition to other requirements. How long would you estimate that it would take a very competent student to get his Ph.D. under that system?

Chao: Usually it would depend on how well grounded in that field the undergraduate study has been. Some of those could have been taken care of before doing graduate work. If they're well taken care of, then the greater part of graduate work could be devoted to the research necessary for the Ph.D.

RL: Then about how long would it have taken from the B.A. to the Ph.D.?

Chao: As far as I can remember, it was something like four years. Three years is considered good speed. There are a couple of cases of students who, after ten or twenty years, are still not finished.

Schneider: Were there some changes in the requirements--which really is to say in the structure of the department and its teaching--that you would like to have seen implemented that somehow never got put through?

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*The Centennial Record of the University of California, 1868-1968 completed and edited by Verne A. Stadtman and the Centennial Publications Staff, University of California Printing Department, Berkeley, 1967, p. 95.

Chao: There had been changes here and there, some of which I was in favor of, but I can't think of any special case where I advocated something that didn't get put through.

Schneider: Would you have preferred more emphasis on teaching the contemporary spoken language?

Chao: I think on the whole, enough emphasis had been given to teaching the contemporary spoken language.

Schneider: What kind of emphasis was in fact put on the spoken language as opposed to examinations that concentrated on translating ability and reading for advanced degrees?

Chao: On the whole, since the topics of the graduate work vary from student to student, the department hasn't made it an actual necessary requirement to be able to use the spoken language actively, especially as we realized that Boodberg couldn't speak at all. [Laughter]

Schneider: Was he in charge of the department for a long period of time?

Chao: Yes, he was in charge for some time; I don't know how long. I think he was chairman more than once. I was chairman twice, only one year each time.

Schneider: You're implying that Boodberg's influential position in the department affected this problem of a spoken language to some degree?

Chao: At least to the extent that nobody insisted on fluent use of the spoken language for every graduate student.

Schneider: Would it have made a difference in the spoken language emphasis if the mainland had been available to--had been accessible to your students after 1949.

Chao: I don't think so, because people from Taiwan speak pretty good Mandarin.

Schneider: Again, I don't know what was happening before 1957--before the NDEA [National Defense Education Act]; were your students going to Taiwan during the fifties to study?

Chao: Some of them did.

RL: Were they encouraged to do so by the department?

Chao: They were not especially urged but they were encouraged. And that center for language study in Taiwan--

Schneider: I think it was called the Stanford Language Program at one time. When did that begin?

Chao: I don't remember; it was probably fifteen years ago or something.

RL: Was there much liaison with other departments? For instance, here we have a history graduate from Berkeley, in Chinese history--Mr. Schneider. Was there much concern about students in other departments who needed Chinese as a part of their program?

Chao: I think in only individual cases. There was no special departmental liaison. For example, Woodbridge Bingham was a good sinologist, but he was in history.

RL: Now, twenty-seven years later, are there changes you would like to see in the department currently?

Chao: My feeling is that it is going in the right direction and it takes time to make progress.

Schneider: What direction is that?

Chao: On the whole, I think it's mostly towards more emphasis on modernization, to modern forms of language. Of course, I would hate to see less emphasis on history and culture and literature, which has been the tradition all along.

RL: Do you notice much change in the student body?

Chao: I'm somewhat out of contact with the student body, but on the whole, they seem to be very active and they have that student publication.

Schneider: The Phi Theta papers?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Are more Chinese coming in now?

Chao: I don't know. Is there a greater ratio of Chinese than there was before?

RL: I don't know, but there is a general trend. I just wondered if it had occurred in oriental languages.

Chao: My impression is that it's about the same.

The East Asiatic Library

RL: I had heard that, in 1947, the East Asiatic Library was very small and almost an amateur library until Elizabeth Huff came. How was it when you first came here?

Chao: It was rather small, yes. Later it moved to Durant Hall [from the main library]. (It used to be called Boalt Hall and now they've renamed it Durant Hall.) The East Asiatic Library was then there. By the way, the term "Asiatic" somehow is resented by Asiatics; now, everybody is supposed to say "Asians," except the name of this library [laughter], which is a proper name that you can't change. There's now a good collection--most of the important things.

RL: Did you work with Elizabeth Huff on the building up of the library?

Chao: No, I didn't, except occasional introductions to collections in China that might be available.

The Loyalty Oath and the Free Speech Movement

RL: How did you feel about the Loyalty Oath controversy which started in 1949?

Chao: The faculty felt that it was discriminatory and they wanted to change that. Many refused to sign. Some of them were fired. And the interesting thing is that at that time, I think, [Earl] Warren as governor was ex-officio chairman of the Board of Regents, and [Edward C.] Tolman of psychology, as leader of the faculty, sued the Board of Regents--sued the University in

Chao: the name of the Board of Regents. Warren was the defendant, but he himself being in sympathy with the faculty, was hoping all the time that he would lose the case, and he did, although not before losing some members of the faculty. There was [Ernst H.] Kantarowicz who left for the east, and Leonardo Olschki also was one of the non-signers; he died subsequently.

RL: Olschki was later re-hired by the University, wasn't he, as a lecturer in the oriental languages department?

Chao: Yes.

RL: What effect did this controversy have on the department? Did it split it?

Chao: Everybody was in sympathy with the majority of the faculty. I don't know of anybody who advocated the Regents' position.

RL: And [Edward H.] Schafer was also a non-signer. What was Boodberg's position on this?

Chao: He was a non-signer.

RL: I think technically not; he did sign. It was said that he signed because he was not a citizen. I don't know whether that's true, but he was anxious about his status because, as you tell me, he was on a Chinese passport.

Chao: Yes, that's right. I can't remember clearly.

RL: Do you agree with the analysis that came out in a book about twenty years after this--that the problem was basically a power struggle and a series of personal encounters between loud and influential men. Would you agree with that?

Chao: That was my impression. There was really no ideological point.

RL: Then the next major drama was in the sixties. You were still here, were you, Larry?

Schneider: Yes.

RL: How did you feel about the Free Speech Movement and all of the troubles that followed on after that?

Chao: I wasn't involved in that--I speak so little. [Laughter] Whatever I speak usually is not concerned with things personal, but more organizational. So, probably whatever I say would be given the freedom I need.

Further Dialect Studies: Toi Shan in Chinatown

RL: During your years in Berkeley, how have your professional interests developed?

Chao: I still have field notes that I haven't quite worked through on the dialect studies done in China. Some of those notes were recently worked through by my colleague in Taiwan and they were printed.

RL: Who was that?

Chao: Yang Shih-Feng.

RL: And which dialect?

Chao: That was Hunan.

RL: And you still have more work to do?

Chao: Yes. I have taken some recordings of the Toi Shan dialect of Chinatown in San Francisco where the majority speak the Tai Shan dialect, and that hasn't been completely transcribed yet. One of the speakers already died, and I'll have to have somebody else to interpret.

RL: Is your technique of working in Chinatown similar to that which you used in China?

Chao: On the whole, it's about the same. I take free conversation, but also I give them type lists of all the phonetic possibilities--characters if they are literate which represent all the possible combinations of sounds.

In all my field work that I did in China, one important thing is to make sure that they are reminded of things that they would <u>say</u> rather than just reading, because when you read it, it is very often different from the way you say it.

RL: How do you choose your informant?

Chao: Very often, I can't choose the best informant. I have to choose informants that are available; then I have to make sure that they are representative of the dialect of places.

RL: How would you define the best informant?

Chao: One whose speech is more typical of the community than one who is either too young or doesn't know enough or one who is influenced by outside dialects.

RL: How do you determine what is representative?

Chao: Before going to a place, I make some general study of the speech of that region, and then compare the various possible informants. One disadvantage I had when I went around in the country [China] was that they knew I was a promoter of standard Mandarin, and they would try to approximate Mandarin when I asked them to speak their own dialect. And so, after a while, I would usually try to get a smattering of their dialect to make them feel at ease to speak their own dialect.

RL: Did you use mostly men, or is this irrelevant?

Chao: It happens that men were usually more available than women, although there were some women. I haven't noticed any consistent difference between men's and women's speech, except, of course, the range of pitch. Then, as to tones, it's relative to one's voice.

RL: Who was the wider range of pitch--men or women?

Chao: If you include falsetto, a man would have quite a range of pitch. But in ordinary speech, it seems about the same.

RL: Have you used women in the Chinatown project?

Chao: No, I haven't.

Schneider: When did you begin the Chinatown project?

Chao: That was more than ten years ago.

Grammar of Spoken Chinese

RL: I know that you are aware of the enormous interest in your grammar of spoken Chinese. I would like to ask what led you to contest the "dogma" that Chinese has no grammar?

Chao: I suppose that that statement usually means that there's no inflection--no tense, no number, no difference in first, second and third person and so forth. But as to word order and word classes (as to their function) and the status of the Chinese syllable being a free word or bound--those are what you would call grammatical features of the language. So there's a good deal to say about Chinese grammar besides inflections.

RL: Would you say that yours was the first major analysis of spoken Chinese grammar?

Chao: I wouldn't say it was the first, but I think that was the most extensive study and went into greater details and considered all the possibilities of Chinese.

Schneider: Were you building on some kind of tradition, then, perhaps from Academia Sinica people who had done some smaller grammatical studies?

Chao: No, I didn't use any special pattern for it. Of course, I had been collecting material for quite some time.

Schneider: Who else would you say had done any significant work before your book on the subject?

Chao: I think Wang Li did some, although he wasn't especially concerned with the colloquial but he included some of the features of the colloquial spoken language. And Li Chin-hsi, whom I saw in 1973; he's older than I am. He has written Kuo-yü Wen-fa (National Language Grammar) which includes all features of spoken grammar; but I think he had also some normative ideas--what's correct and what's not correct.

RL: How has your work been received in China?

Chao: There are not many copies there. As far as I know, it seems to be quite interesting and I have received no criticism, but

Chao: there's sure to be many errors here and there and I haven't received any list of corrigenda.

RL: What do you think of [W.A.C.H.] Dobson's work?

Chao: His work is descriptive, but it's somewhat limited in scope; that's my impression.

I mostly collect materials for my book from what I hear--that is primary sources--and from what I read. If I feel that the material read represents the actual speech--that's most of what's called pai hua. I wouldn't say most, but much of what's called written pai hua is not what you would ordinarily speak in everyday speech, and I limited myself to what really goes in everyday speech.

Schneider: Was it your intention to have the book used for the teaching of the spoken language as opposed to analysis?

Chao: It can't be used as a textbook, but it can be used as a reference book by students. It has a fairly detailed index.

Comments on Modern Linguistics

RL: What do you think about the development of linguistics since 1945?

Chao: A lot of people are working on the problem of transformational grammar. I did have some additions in my language book*--just a few paragraphs--on transformational grammar. My present feeling is that transformational grammar is in a state of transformation. Once you transform some structure, you will have some other structure. You try to get at the meaning; you try to get at things behind the language. And then, in telling about your result, you're still using language. So we go a step further behind that; you might quote Ogden and Richards idea of "the meaning of meaning." You try to go behind meaning, and unless you go into the actual experience, you still use language. So when are you going to stop? When do you find

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*Yuen Ren Chao, Language and Symbolic Systems, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge and New York, 1968.

Chao: the roots of things? To be sure as you go along, you do find an interest in important features of the meaning of language but still in the form of language.

RL: I wish I had come to you about four years ago when my youngest son was hung up for about half the year on the question, "How would you explain 'meaning' or 'I mean' to somebody who didn't speak English?"

Chao: I think in Chinese you do it the same way as in French--*je veux dire*, *wo shih yao shuo*. You just change the language; you put it in other words. *Wo shih yao shuo* means literally "I am wanting to say."

RL: Have you found [Noam] Chomsky and his disciples at all helpful to you in your work?

Chao: I haven't made much use of what is written, but much of it is very interesting and suggestive.

RL: If you assigned yourself to any sort of school, whose would it be? Would it be Bloomfield's?

Chao: Yes; I think I'm still a structuralist, which is nowadays considered out of fashion.

Schneider: I don't know what psycho-linguistics is, but it seems to me that this is one of the latest developments in linguistics. Have you any feelings about its growth and what it might mean as far as the study of language?

Chao: I think it's an important feature of the study of language. Or you might consider it part of psychology, whether it's called linguistic psychology or psycho-linguistics.

Schneider: Does this development have much to do with the kind of work that you've done?

Chao: As far as I know, I haven't found any important applications.

Professional Associations

RL: You've belonged to many professional associations, and I wonder if you have any comments on how they have changed over the years. I think you were president of the Linguistic Society of America in '45 and the American Oriental Society in 1960.

Chao: The Linguistic Society, as represented by the general language, has added more--of course, it includes transformational grammar now, and also it includes more of the less known foreign languages, so there are descriptive articles, although it is generally not primarily devoted to description of languages.

I think the same is true in general of the American Oriental Society--that it has widened its field--its scope in including more languages than it did before. The general language originally, when it began, had much more to do with Indo-European languages.

RL: Which associations do you continue to find interesting and valuable?

Chao: I think I have more to do with the Linguistics Society because in the American Oriental Society they branch out more into the areas about which I don't know so much now.

RL: India and Southeast Asia, and so on?

Chao: Yes.

The Faculty Research Lecture

RL: I read with great interest the faculty research lecture that you gave in 1967. (Unfortunately, we were away that year, so I didn't hear it.) Have you changed your views at all since publishing your paper on "Dimensions of Fidelity in Translation with Special Reference to Chinese"?

Chao: There may be some difference in the matter of detail, but on the whole, I tried to enumerate as many dimensions that can be involved. In each dimension there is plus and minus and

Chao: middle and so forth, so there's room for all views. The purpose of that article was to call attention to translators who should consider all these factors, and then as to what weight to give to each factor--that would depend upon the purpose for which the translation is made. I think one of the conclusions was that there is no one correct translation from language A to language B, depending upon the purpose for which the translation is going to be used.

"Language at Play and Play at Language"

RL: I understand you were much sought-after as a lecturer. What were the main subjects on which you talked to these sometimes non-specialist groups?

Chao: All I can remember is that I often talked about playing with language and talking and singing backwards. From that, I intended to show how certain sounds are dipthongs (if you reversed them, you see the words wouldn't be right), or certain consonants are complex consonants and not one single when you reverse it.

It turned out that singing backwards is much easier than talking backwards because when you sing, even a syllable with several notes, you still have several theoretically level notes; you just reverse the tune. Whereas, in talking, every syllable itself--even in a non-tonal language like English, you have change of pitch within the syllable and you have to reverse that change. In most languages, in the final part of a non-interrogative sentence or phrase, you would drop way down to the very bottom, and it's very hard to reverse because when you start from a very low pitch, the tendency is to drop first before you go up. So a syllable like "go" [gou]--well it has a dipthong and you can reverse the "ou" into "uo" very easily. But if you tried to say "uog" it wouldn't reverse right because you didn't start low enough, a characteristic feature of a concluding intonation which is, I think, universal for all languages. It's something that's hard to reverse. You have to really start very low--"uog."

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*See Appendix. A tape of this lecture is deposited in The Bancroft Library.

RL: You promised to bring in your tape!

Chao: Yes. I forgot to bring it with me.

RL: In this business of speaking and singing backwards, what--apart from the sheer fun and pleasure of it--was your didactic purpose? What were you showing?

Chao: As I was saying, at one of the meetings to find out the homogeneity or the complexity of units of sound, which sometimes one takes for granted as one unit of sound. If it is one sound, it could be reversed. If it's complex, then the order would be reversed. You think of long "ā" as one vowel, but if it's reversed it becomes "ie" rather than "ei." So it shows that the English "a" is a dipthong, whereas the French "é" is one simple sound.

Or the English consonant "p"--you think it is one sound--"pa." It is not one sound "p" followed by "a"; it is "p" plus aspiration plus "a," so that if you reverse it, it has to be "a'p," with an aspiration in between. The French "p" is a pure, one sound, because it's just a closing of the lips.

RL: What is the importance of this in linguistic studies?

Chao: It's mainly for the purpose of analyzing speech accurately. The idea of reversing came to me first when I heard a recording sent to me by C.K. Ogden, one of the co-authors of Basic English years ago in the early 1930s to Nanking. The main part of that recording was, I think, about Basic English. It was English in reverse. I tried to transcribe it phonetically; if I did it right and then read it backwards, it should come out as English. When I did transcribe it and read it back, it was still unintelligible to me. So I gave up and played the record backwards to get the original English.

Comparing that with my transcription, I was right--I have it figured somewhere--around seventy-five percent. I was right about the manner of pronunciation, but I was wrong, I think, in fifty-six percent of the cases about the place of articulation--whether it was labial or dental or velar and so forth. And for intelligibility, the place of articulation is more important. That's why still I couldn't understand it when I had the words.

Chao: When the record was played backwards, it was the original speech. In fact, originally it was recorded directly as ordinary speech. Then it was re-recorded in reverse. I wrote a report on that in Chinese in the Bulletin of Institute of History and Philology of Academia Sinica,* and later I reported on that in English. That started my interest in reversed speech.

RL: Then how did you teach yourself to do these things in reverse?

Chao: For new stuff, I knew what the text is just from ordinary knowledge of the phonetic composition of various sounds in various languages. I would have to reverse the complex units in the reverse order. Of course, some are hard to say. For example, the difference between affricates chi unaspirated and ch'i aspirated is just the difference in the length of that fricative part.

RL: In what language was that?

Chao: Any language, when you have chi and ch'i. Ordinarily, in the Wade system, for spelling Chinese, you'd have c-h-i for "chi" and c-h-'-i for "ch'i." From that you might think that "ch'i" consists of ch plus "huh"; there is no "huh' to it because you use the flattened part of the tongue, and when it comes the vowel, you still use the flat part of the tongue. There's no room for saying "huh"; so it's really just the "ch" part that gets prolonged. So the reverse of "ch'i" [iɕ:t], whereas the reverse of "chi" is [iɕt], a short fricative part to give you the effect of being unaspirated. That was unexpected in the reversal.

RL: How would you spell those? I'm thinking of the transcriber!

Chao: Well, phonetically there is a sign for--

RL: Please write it down.

Chao: I'll first put it down in Wade, "chi" then in parentheses I'll give the phonetic spelling.

chi [tɕi]
ch'i [tɕ:i]

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*"Transcribing Reversed English," BIHP, Vol. II 205-22, 1930.

RL: Which of your colleagues were seriously interested in this?

Chao: Well, those who were interested in phonetics were interested in the thing, and always interested in hearing the actual demonstration with instruments.

RL: What do you mean?

Chao: That is, recording and have the tape reversed. At first we did that--before the time of the tape recording--I managed to reverse the disc.

RL: Really! How did you do that.

Chao: It was possible to move the needle. Ordinarily, you see, if you reversed it, the needle would push into the disc, but you can reverse that by re-arranging the direction of the playing head.

RL: So it's simply the head with the needle and not the whole arm?

Chao: Yes.

RL: Did you do your own mechanical work yourself?

Chao: Some of it; sometimes my assistant helped me.

RL: It's a fascinating field because it touches on so many disciplines.

Children and Language Study

RL: I believe you were a pioneer in studying children's language?

Chao: No, I was never a pioneer but I was interested in child language and also I was interested in the speech of my cousins. When I was at home in Changchow I noticed their differences. One of them had certain characteristics and speech defects, and somehow a system of defective speech usually has the characteristics of a dialect. There are certain phonetic laws you can infer from the speech so that

Chao: you will be able to make new sentences in that dialect. A more detailed study is when I recorded the speech of my granddaughter. That was much later.*

RL: Were you influenced by the work of [Jean] Piaget at all?

Chao: Somewhat, yes.

RL: Do you feel that your findings influenced theories of child psychology, child development, and language development?

Chao: Well, I didn't notice that except that, both in the case of my children and grandchildren, and in other cases, that language can be learned and used and kept up in the right environment, and there is no harm in adding a language to the child in his general mental development. You see, usually there is a theory that when you teach a child another language, all that's learned before has been lost and he has to start learning everything new. That was because he changed from one language to another. But if you add a language to another, and keep up the first language, then it wouldn't hurt.

RL: Currently, people are still advising bilingual families to drop a language if a child stutters.

Chao: Yes, if a child stutters, then maybe.

I haven't done extensive research; I am only interested and have observed various cases. In one case, a Danish student of mine, living near us, married an American wife and started the children with two languages at the same time--the father talking Danish and the mother talking English. After they went back to Denmark, they kept up the same pattern, and the children kept up the same two languages, apparently without any adverse effects.

RL: Did you find your studies of child grammar to be valuable to you in your language analyses?

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*"The Canton Idiolect: An Analysis of the Chinese Spoken by a 28-month-old Child." Semitic and oriental studies, University of California, publications on semitic philology, 27-44, Berkeley, 1951.

Chao: I haven't done very much with cases of that kind. Of course, in most cases of grammar, a child tends to generalize too easily, and that in fact I think is one of the causes of the change of grammar in a language itself after certain centuries.

RL: Oh, really?

Chao: Yes. Certain things become generalized that first started as mistakes.

General Chinese: A New Language Reform

Chao: After the war, I started to be interested in what I call the scheme or project for a General Chinese, the idea being to reduce ten thousand common characters into two thousand, and still be able to write most texts with the ordinary characters, because eighty percent of the ten thousand occur so infrequently that the two thousand would cover more than ninety percent of the actual occurrence.

RL: Has this been usable for general texts?

Chao: Yes. It would be intelligible and you could compose either classical or colloquial Chinese with that text. We're still working on it; this is one of the drafts.

RL: What sort of acceptance has this had?

Chao: It hasn't been sent to many people except specialists, and they have written--one of them, Mr. Li, Li Rong, wrote very detailed comments. He's a linguist himself who translated the grammar section of my Mandarin primer into Chinese. I adopted most of his very good suggestions in the revision of this project.

RL: Where is Mr. Li?

Chao: He's in Peking.

Meeting with Chou En-lai, 1973

RL: I had heard--I don't know if it's accurate--that when you went to China last year, that Premier Chou [En-lai] was very much interested in the work you are doing on General Chinese.

Chao: Not specifically this project for General Chinese, but he was interested in my linguistic studies in general.

RL: I don't mean to pry into what may have been a confidential conversation, but what sorts of things did you and your wife and Chou discuss?

Chao: About things in general, actually. He asked about things some years back, and about how Chinese language teaching was being done abroad. Many years ago, when he was a student in Nankai, he intended to go to Peking to study when I was teaching at Tsing Hua, but because I soon moved into the city to interpret for Bertrand Russell, he gave up his plans. So, we never met. This time, I thought I should let him know that I was in town. It would have been okay if he was too busy, but he invited us to a party.

RL: That's a fascinating story. How had he heard of you, do you think, as a young student?

Chao: I don't know. In those days, I was rather active in connection with the Unification of Language movement, and he himself was interested in dramatics as a student. Being a very handsome student, he sometimes impersonated female parts at Nankai university.

RL: It's hard to visualize now. He is extremely handsome, but it's hard to see him as delicate. [Laughter]

Chao: Well, he was in those days.

RL: What was your impression of him? Obviously, he is an extraordinarily intelligent man.

Chao: Yes. He seems to be aware of the events of the day, as he had to be.

RL: Did you know of him at all in the twenties and thirties?

Chao: I knew of his intention to go to Peking (which he didn't), but didn't have any direct communication with him.

RL: Was he aware of the level of Chinese studies in America?

Chao: Only in a general way, not in detail.

P'u t'ung hua and Pin yin

RL: What is the government doing currently about language reform? Perhaps one shouldn't use that phrase anymore; I don't know.

Chao: The use of Mandarin is taken for granted and there has been great progress in its actual use. For example, in the radio broadcasts, not only in Peking but in Nanking and Canton and Shanghai--Canton and Shanghai especially--I noticed that nine-tenths of the time, the broadcast was done in Mandarin, and only one-tenth in the local dialect. The Chinese term, which used to be called kuo-yü (national language) now is called p'u-t'ung hua (general speech). In the old days, p'u-t'ung hua meant any way of talking according to the dialects north of the Yangtze river, more or less in some loose sense, of a sort of Mandarin. Now, that is taken to be the standard term instead of kuo-yü (national language), and also the standard took the phonetic system of Peking as the standard pronunciation. So p'u-t'ung hua has now acquired a more standard, precise meaning.

RL: Would you say that it was identical or almost identical with the language records that you made in the 1920s?

Chao: Yes, except the first set, which was that artificial language--yes.

RL: Is this contribution of yours recognized in China?

Chao: I suppose most people know. Of course, in China they discourage the publicity for individual names. For example, they reprinted some of my books--and other books too--with the authors' names omitted. I bought a copy of my own book.

RL: How do you feel about that?

Chao: I feel that the author's name should appear, not only for promoting his name, but also for being responsible for whatever errors there might be.

RL: How about the romanization?

Chao: The new system is called pinyin, which literally means spell sounds, and that system is pretty close to the old system except in a few consonants which are rather different from the western usage. The letter j for (unaspirated palatal) ch--that's very common, in other systems too--the palatal chi. But you also have q for the aspirated--for the (palatal) ch' and x for hsi, the palatal sort of sound--i.e. the Wade "hs" is spelled x. The use of z for ts is common in some of the systems, and so is c for ts'. In other respects, it's about the same as in many other old systems.

RL: When you say "old" do you mean Latinxua or G.R.?

Chao: I mean the same as many other systems.

RL: I'm very interested that you're having the active cooperation of a scholar in Peking in this. Is he an old friend or colleague of yours?

Chao: We knew each other first by correspondence and then met later. In fact, after translating my grammar chapter in my Mandarin primer, he gave me two or three hundred dollars for the rights and sent it to my daughter, and she has been keeping that there [laughter] all the time.

RL: Was that your daughter in Shanghai?

Chao: Not in Shanghai, in Changsha. I have never heard about Li for years and she has. [Laughter] This last time we were in Peking, we had two all-morning sessions with linguists--about twenty linguists--discussing the idea of the General Chinese.

RL: Is the government actively interested in this?

Chao: Not in an active way. Those who attended were all either professors at Peking University or members of Academia Sinica.

RL: Did you feel any sense of strain with them?

Chao: I felt quite at ease. Of course, some of them I knew. Some of them were my former students.

RL: What sort of work is going on in linguistics in China? Were you impressed with it?

Chao: I was impressed by the fact that they knew so much of what is going on. They had been keeping up with things very well. They also continue with the recording of the present state of language in various parts of the country.

RL: Is this going to be an ongoing project, do you think, to follow language changes, or will it be completed at some point when all the dialects have been surveyed?

Chao: That survey--the first time we could only do it in outline; there are more details, of course. Then, by the time you complete it once, there are probably some that will have changed already. [Laughter] As for the unification, I don't think you would--well, it wasn't intended to abolish the dialects. When you promote the general speech, just as in the case of France, you still have patois as well as the standard speech.

RL: Did people talk to you at all about their status during the Cultural Revolution? Was that discussed?

Chao: They said very little about the Cultural Revolution. They regard that as something that's over, something to get over with.

RL: You said they were quite well up on current research.

Chao: Yes, they subscribed to the western journals and would buy the new books.

RL: And evidently there is enough money budgeted for this.

Chao: Yes.

RL: What were the discussions on the level of literacy in China at the moment?

Chao: I don't remember any discussion about literacy.

RL: Isn't this General Chinese closely tied in with the problems of literacy in that it's easier to learn two thousand characters than ten?

Chao: Yes, it would be of help, although not especially meant for that. They were going slow about adopting any alphabetic form of language, even though there's a standard way of spelling. But they still use the characters--so-called simplified characters. The so-called simplified characters actually were old simplifications in more than eighty percent of the cases.

RL: From the twenties and thirties?

Chao: No, old simplifications since the Sung and Yuan. [Laughter] There was a book published in 1930 on popular characters since Sung and Yuan, which means even before Ming Dynasty. Among the simplified character list published now, more than eighty percent were popular characters in the Sung and Yuan. The only difference is that until recently those were popular characters used in maybe popular novels, what they considered things fit for women [laughter] to read. If you do it in school or in public documents, it would be considered in the wrong style. But now, they are made more respectable. The actual, additional simplified characters form a small minority--less than twenty percent.

RL: When you say that the General Chinese that you are working on is not primarily designed to make literacy easier to acquire, what is the primary purpose of it?

Chao: The primary purpose is to have a system of writing in which each character would represent a linguistic form which is sort of a least common multiple of the major dialects. There were various schemes of similar kinds. There were the two Belgian Jesuits--Lamasse and Jasmin in a work they called Romanization Interdialectique (Interdialectical Romanization), published in the early 1930s. They worked in northeast China. They were not linguists themselves, so they just adopted Karlgren's reconstruction of ancient Chinese for 601 A.D. and romanized Chinese. They composed many texts too for teaching purposes. In that system, 601 A.D., it is so long ago that many of the distinctions no longer exist anywhere in China now. So that is starting too far back, whereas my idea of taking two thousand syllables that would account for

Chao: the major dialects of the last--well, in fact, the current status of the major dialects (Mandarin, Cantonese and Wu).

I would allow differences in less than twenty percent, as I was saying, of running text. We'd have differences from the ordinary distribution of characters, but more than eighty percent would coincide with what we would write anyway. It doesn't limit you to any style because it's very colloquial.

RL: How far is it "culture-free" in the sense of being neither communist nor classical? I'm perhaps expressing myself badly.

Chao: Classical and communist are not antithetical.

RL: Perhaps it would be better to say mainland usage in the last twenty-five years, compared with the Nanyang and Taiwan and overseas Chinese. Would this be usable by all literate Chinese?

Chao: The great majority already are old popular characters; the others I think you can guess pretty well from context. That is, a newspaper published in Peking, the People's Daily could be read by anybody who hasn't been introduced to the new system of simplified characters.

RL: Even if its primary purpose is not to increase the literacy rate, do you think it would be useful in teaching? It would seem to me to be an enormous advantage.

Chao: Yes.

RL: Did you discuss this with Premier Chou at all?

Chao: I just mentioned it; we didn't go into discussion.

RL: I understood that your wife also discussed birth control with Premier Chou.

Chao: Yes. Later, she found a lot of materials and sent them over.

RL: Do you correspond actively now with scholars in China?

Chao: Occasionally. Some of them have visited here.

RL: Do you foresee that this present trend toward freer exchange and travel will continue?

Chao: I think so. Of course, they're busy with preparations for the People's Congress. But still, at least our relatives keep writing fairly frequently.

Family in China

RL: I'm afraid I don't know the name of your daughter who is married and lives in China.

Chao: Her married name is Huang; that is my son-in-law's name. Pei-Yung is his own name. Then my daughter's American name is Nova, but in Chinese it's Xin-na, in the current spelling.

RL: She and her husband are both teaching, are they?

Chao: Yes. Her husband is head of the Central South Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, and she is head of the Chemistry Department of the University.

RL: How was it to see them after so many years?

Chao: Well, somehow it seemed more natural than I had expected. Even those two grown-up grandsons--twenty-one and twenty-six when I saw them--seemed very natural with us and stayed with us in Peking for a month. I asked somebody to substitute for their work there and then they would return the work after they went back.

RL: Were you asked to return to China, to come and live there again?

Chao: They didn't quite specifically say that, but they said, "We hope you will come back again."

RL: Did you ever get the sense that people were critical of you for your decisions to stay in America?

Chao: Apparently not. They didn't criticize us for changing our citizenship.

RL: I know when we went to Israel, on the very last night of our stay there, a quite aggressive woman said, "Why do you not resettle?" [Laughter] That is Zionist ideology, and it's a very difficult attitude to respond to with courtesy. Did anybody ever approach you in that sort of way?

Chao: No.

RL: How was it that your daughter, Nova, decided to stay or go back to China?

Chao: She and her husband finished here and had job offers in China. We were supposed to follow them right away. I was asked by Chu Chia-hua to be president of the Central University in Nanking, and I wanted to avoid administrative work in any way I could. My wife said, "If you're there, it's hard to decline, so you'd better stay away." As a matter of fact, Chu sent me two telegrams and I declined both times. The third time, he telegraphed my wife, "Will you persuade Yuen Ren to accept?" She replied, "I never persuade him to do any administrative work." We stopped over [in Berkeley] on our way back to China. I had already recommended somebody else to take my place at Harvard, so we stopped over, and at California we've been stopping over [laughter] ever since!

Comments on the Chaos' Trip to China

RL: We had touched on, in passing, your trip to China last year, in 1973. Do you plan to go back there?

Chao: Yes. I think I'll probably go next year. For this year, I'll have to take a long trip to go to the east coast.

RL: What were the things that struck you most about your trip--the changes and so on?

Chao: People seemed to be happier and in better shape than I had anticipated. They all looked healthy and not fancily dressed but well clothed, although children were dressed colorfully--all kinds of colors. As to our own relatives, our second daughter, Nova, whom we hadn't seen for twenty-seven years, still has that high-pitched voice. And the son-in-law, whom we hadn't seen for twenty-seven years, was still about the same.

Chao: The two grandsons--twenty-one and twenty-six--we saw for the first time. They seemed to be naturally well-behaved rather than especially taught to behave properly in front of us. That is true, I think, of most young people we saw.

On the stage--all the shows we saw--would have people acting dramatically and pointing and gesticulating and talking loudly and quickly, but we never saw that in life there.

One thing that impressed me was that hundreds of bicycles would be piled up on the sidewalks and none of them was locked. Apparently, there is not enough stolen to need a lock. And when a rider of a bicycle hits somebody on the street, he stops right away and asks, "Did I hurt you?"

We saw mostly Peking city and Nanking and my hometown, Changchow, and Shanghai, and Canton.

Schneider: I was going to ask how the food was. [Laughter]

Chao: The food was excellent. Very cheap. Cheap from their standards too, because people, at least in our class--teachers--could never spend the money they earned; they had to leave the money in the bank. Because there they have rations for various things, so you can't spend all the money you make. As an example, in the big hotel we stayed in (Ch'ien Men Hotel), for western style of food, we'd start with full variety of things for hors d'oeuvres. We'd have soup of various kinds, and a fish or shrimp course and then a meat course (three pork chops or half a chicken) and then dessert and coffee, and cream and butter and so forth. How much do you think it costs?

RL: I don't know.

Chao: A wild guess. [Laughter]

RL: Five dollars?

Chao: Two dollars Peoples' money, which is one dollar American money. And with the salary--for example, my son-in-law, as head of an institute, receives a salary of two hundred and eighty, I think--something like that. My daughter has a salary of one hundred and eighty, and they couldn't spend all the money they make.

RL: What was the atmosphere like in the universities?

Chao: I haven't visited any classes. University people there were just like you would find anywhere else. Some of them were my former students, and the head of Peking University used to stay in our house in Cambridge, Mass. Of course, it's no more a missionary university; Yenching University building has been used by the Peking University. Tsing Hua University is the college of science and engineering of Peking University. I visited there and still recognized some of the old buildings, although they added more buildings there.

RL: To add to Larry's question, was the food still as regional? Could you get Cantonese specialties in Canton, and so on?

Chao: Yes, it was regional, but less so, perhaps, slightly than before. But the unification of the language movement has gone very fast. In the radio broadcasts, they use Mandarin, of course, in the northern provinces, but in Shanghai, nine-tenths of the time it was in Mandarin; only one-tenth of the time was it in the Shanghai dialect. And the same is true of Canton--nine-tenths of the time in Mandarin and one-tenth of the time in Cantonese.

RL: That would assume that people can understand; would you also expect that ninety percent could speak in Mandarin?

Chao: You would go to a store in Shanghai and they would talk Mandarin, unless you started talking Shanghai dialect. On Grant Avenue in San Francisco, in some of the bigger stores, you can start in Mandarin and they'll answer back in Mandarin. The new term for Mandarin now is p'u-t'ung hua (general speech).

The term p'u-t'ung hua used to mean any non-local, some sort of northern type of speech with various local accents. But now, it's used as a technical term and means the standard, and they've taken the pronunciation of Peking as the standard. P'u-t'ung hua is now the technical term for the standard of speech.

RL: And would it be fair to say that that is Chao's speech, based on the records you made in the twenties?

Chao: I don't think that's fair because I was using the speech of the city of Peking as a basis when the committee decided on

Chao: that as the standard. That standard has never been changed; only they changed the term--instead of kuo-yü (national language), they call it p'u-t'ung hua (general speech).

RL: However, wasn't it your records that spread knowledge of this--

Chao: It did help; I hope it did help. But there were schools teaching everywhere.

Schneider: What do you expect to be doing, other than enjoying yourself, on your next trip to the mainland?

Chao: I didn't see enough of all the places I visited, and some places I didn't visit I would like to visit again. In my hometown of Changchow, for example, I spent only one day at a special meeting of people of different generations talking in the local dialect, and I was surprised that there was relatively little change in the pronunciation. Of course, there were the new terms about new things; that's a different story. As far as pronunciation is concerned, I couldn't tell any difference. And I didn't sound foreign to them. [Laughter]

Summing Up

RL: Is there anything else you would like to say about your years here at the University?

Chao: I used to be able to say I have lived in Peking longer than I have lived anywhere else; then I would say I lived in Cambridge, Mass. longer than anywhere else; then I'd say I lived in Nanking longer than anywhere else. Now I can say I have lived in Berkeley, California, longer than anywhere else. I feel really at home in the city of Berkeley and the University.

RL: You brought up two generations of Chinese girls--your own four girls and your granddaughter, Canta. I would like to ask what principles you and your wife had in mind in the upbringing of your daughters.

Chao: We have always been speaking Chinese at home, but we never tried to make them patriotic Chinese citizens; all of them

Chao: are American citizens, as a matter of fact. For myself, at least, I am very much international-minded. In my high school days, when I read Myers History of the World, in which he proposed the idea of a world state, I decided I wanted to sign up as a world citizen. In being with our children, we never emphasized either their being U.S. citizens or Chinese citizens, but we were always very much interested in things cultural and linguistic in Chinese, and they didn't have to be told what to think.

With our granddaughter, Canta, we kept up her Chinese speech at home until she went to school, and she learned English in no time--went to nursery school and started talking English with Grandma, and Grandma said, "Grandma don't understand English." "What are you saying now?" [Laughter] We did keep up her language, but she found it something artificial, something that was only used at home and with a few friends. When she was less than ten years old, I think, we brought her to Taiwan and she said, "Oh, there is really a place where people do talk like that!" [Laughter] It was a real language.

But in the eastern cities where her parents are living in the Boston area, there are more families where the children do speak Chinese, and she found the language more real there.

Here, of course, the Chinese that you hear is Cantonese, and she didn't understand that.

RL: I don't know if you know, Larry, that all four of the Chaos' daughters have Ph.D.s--two mathematicians, and a chemist and then Iris' degree is in music. This is a record attained by very few! I wondered if you had any theories that you put into practice that resulted in this success story.

Chao: I'm not saying. [Laughter]

RL: Would you have brought the children up the same, do you think, if you'd had sons?

Chao: I can't tell you why I should have brought them up differently. Possibly, sons are more independent, and when they're old enough, they choose their own direction.

RL: Do you feel that you strongly influenced your girls? Your implying that you feel you had a stronger influence on them perhaps because they were girls and not boys.

Chao: I don't know. We didn't try to influence them. We did very little direct teaching--how to behave and so forth.

RL: Had you changed your ideas at all when you had Canta to bring up?

Chao: I don't think that we treated her any differently from her aunts and mother.

RL: Thank you very much. In the appendix material, Larry, I thought we might use one of Mr. Chao's famous Green Letters.

Schneider: I don't know what a Green Letter is.

Chao: Here's an example. First, second, third Green Letter. I have been preparing my fourth Green Letter since 1925. [Laughter]

Schneider: What are they about?

Chao: About various things--everything. I also collect proverbs and sayings, not for keepsake but to see what I can do with them. Here is a little of what I've undone: A friend in debt is a friend you bet. The loud tie betrays the vacant purse. Fine leather makes fine boots. Where there's a swell, there's a sway. Loaf, and the world loafs with you; sweep, and you sweep alone. Woo as you would be won by. (This one Bertrand Russell liked very much--woo as you would be won by.) Timidity is the daughter of convention. Two heads are better than three. Four lips are better than two. Familiarity breeds attempt. (Recently I saw that in Saturday Review.) Shrink before you squeak. No smack without fire. There's nothing new under the moon. They usually tell about my comings and goings and travel and so forth.

Schneider: I'd like to see those, and I'd like to see your fourth Green Letter too!

Chao: I'm preparing that, but I think I need these for my work right now. I can let you have one of these of which I have an extra copy. Yes, the first Green Letter, I have two copies. That is 1921.

RL: Was that your wedding announcement as well as a newsletter?

Chao: No. That was April, 1921, just before our marriage.

RL: By the way, why did you call them "Green Letters?"

Chao: That was the only reason.

RL: That the outside was green? [Laughter] I'm always looking for hidden meanings within meanings within meanings. I should perhaps ask you if, amongst your scores of hundreds of puns, have you got a favorite?

Chao: I can't tell. [Laughter]

RL: Thank you very much.

Chao: It's been my pleasure.

Academia Sinica, Taiwan - 1960s. Front row: Mr. and Mrs. Chao; Hu Shih next to Mrs. Chao; Li Chi, second from right.

Public lecture, Taiwan - 1960s
In front of portrait of Sun Yat-sen.

China, 1973, with Premier Chou. From left to right: Huang Pei-yung, son-in-law; Y.R. Chao; Nova Xinna Chao, daughter; Chou Pi-yuan, President of Pei Ta; Mrs. Chao; Kuo Mo-jo, President of Academia Sinica; Chou En-lai.

Taiwan - 1959

The Chaos with Chou Pi-yuan

"Your Place, Feb., Mar. or Ap., 1921.

"Mr. Yuen Ren Chao, 2 Sui An Po Hutung, Peking.

"Hello! Chao,

Here you are at last! I have not seen you for ages, for miles, not since July 13-15 1920, which was some ten thousand miles ago. But I say! What's the matter with you now? You've changed! and how shockingly changed! Why, I can hardly recognize you any more."

This, or something like this, is what I expect you to exclaim on hearing from one who used to be what you still remember me as. Fact is: my ideas, fellings, circumstances, and especially opinions are now as different from what they were seven months ago as they were from what they had been seven months and seven years ago. So you should be prepared to read this letter as from a hitherto unknown one, whose acquaintance you may care to cultivate (because you hate him less than the man you thought he was), or whose chance of salvation (from evil or from good as the case may be) is too slim for you to waste your sympathies on. But if you have a couple of decades to spare, just sit down and let me remind you, concisely, what I said in my last letter of July 13-15 1920 to you. I said, briefly, that the letter took approximately twenty-four hours to write, one and one half hours to read from its initial commencement to its final termination; that in case that that letter should fail to reach you, you were requested to be so very kind as to notify me to that effect; and that I should then immediately notify you that I did mail it to you inspite of your assertion to the contrary. Further, I said:

"I can hear you say: "What's become of so and so? I haven't heard an echo of him for such a long time." To tell you the exaggerated truth, I haven't written any letter ever since my writing revel in the Fall of 1918. My unanswered letters amount to a drawerful (that is, if I muss them up a little). To be safe and generous I'll say that you wrote me last in July, 1920, and I wrote you last from or before Chicago, 1918. This may be a little more than true, but then it follows that it must be at least true. "Tell me all about yourself," you have so often asked me——unrespondedly. All right, I will begin from 1918, or what is only approximately a decade earlier, from 1908,—well, why not 余性 begin from the last decade of the 18's?

"This threatens to be a little autoliargraphical.* But *after* this part I'll try to be interesting. Here goes: I was born at about 5.30 a.m. November, 1829. I was born in Tientsin, but my birthplace was Changchow, which used to be two days of panting river steamer from Shanghai, but now the distance has shortened to 4 hours. By birthplace, according to our usage, I mean of course the place where one's ancestors were born and to which one's own dialect belongs. My own dialect, however, I did not learn to speak until I was 9 or 10.

"That does not mean, however, that I was less than or equal

*I meant to write autobiographical. But my typist seemed to know better, subconsciously, so I'll let the liar stand.

to a moron. I spoke Peking speech first. At four, I began to memorize a few 1000 characters and to learn by heart a few dozen volumes of standard classical literature.

"I traveled a good deal with the members of my family. I visited Tientsin, Peking, Paoting, 磁州, 祁州, 黃州 et cetera, if any. I saw the boxers in 1900. But I interested myself chiefly in watching thunderstorms, and staying up watching no moon on the sky (total eclipse about 1897). Traveling in a ship is another of my dream-frequenting fancies.

"My parents and cousins returned home when I was about eight: and, apologizing to Stephan Leacock ("Sunshine Sketches," Preface) I decided to return with them. First ride on a great big sea-going ship! Occidental foreigners, playing cards. They must be talking my home dialect, for I could not understand them. Oh, what beautiful shining noisy majestic machinery! There's my ambition.

"Here we are at Shanghai. See those "self-lighting lamps." They actually light themselves! In Shanghai I did not stay long. On to Soochow and then back to Changchow.

"Now is the time for study again. But I would rather steal every moment peeping into such borrowed books as 格致須知 (physics) 天文須知 (astron.) 穆勒名學 (Mill's Logic, way over my head), or shooting water at paper windows and people with a home-made bamboo pump, or making a river steamer out of an alarm clock, or boiling kerosene over a cooking stove, or making horizontal bar of a bamboo pole, or trying to play flute music with my aunt,—everything reminisceable and less reminiscible, anything rather than study.

"Things changed. So did I. At twelve (I mean o'clock, of course!) I was the only member of my family. A year at Soochow with relatives. Did not like arithmetic. Back to Changchow, entered a *school* for first time. By this time I had acquired a liking for this language I am writing in. I knew enough to say: "It is a dog." My pronunciation was perfect. I got the exact Anglo-Soochow and Anglo-Changchow accents of my teachers. A phonograph could not have done better. But there was not much English in this "Creek Hill" (溪山) school. In 1907, I went to Nanking and began three reminiscible years. Whenever I recall

"5./1 - 1111/5, — — . 5./1—15.13/5 - . . . ."

blown over by a wind from a distant camp to the grounds of the Kiangnan High School, then the whole scene came back to me. Here I made my first American friend, from whom I learned to say: "injoy," "haf," "dzero," Here I also learned to know Eugene Sandow and B.F., printer-scientist-statesman-writer. Prep Dept. graduation in Dec. '09. On Jan. 1, 1910 ('09?) I puffed my last puff of a few thousand puffs of cigarettes. Do you know I went to college in China? Yes, I studied in the Collegiate department for 20 days. Then a whim blew me to Peking picking up some solid geom, trig, hist, latin, ... for the second examination for Tsing Hua Scholarship to America. . . . . It is August. Aboard for Shanghai! Into a Shanghai barber shop I brought my headtail (queue), out of it, did I bring my head or tail? Now the barbaric collar custom. With a slight exaggeration, but much exertion, I put on my first collar in 17 minutes. I do not remember what date I sailed on. But since my arrival at Shanghai is about

August 17, 1920, will you please be so good as to let me believe that I sailed on August 17, 1910? (I found out later it was August 16, 1910, so I was away from China for ten years and a day).

"First lesson in instruments of occidental dietetics. The gang that crossed the gangway onto S.S. "China" was a congenial one. From the leader I learned such conceptions as pure science, "means as if end," cocoa, prejudice, definite integral. Saw double rainbow after a shower.

"At this rate, I shall nearly finish this letter when I see you again. So I'll ask my chauffeur Mr. H. G. Wells to gear up my time machine and go straight to John Christopher Clark's—no, I mean David Fletcher Hoy's office; buy, bear, and burn a fresh cap; study physics and mathematics, picking up philosophy, psychology, music, and tongues by the way; go to Harvard for three philosophical years, chasing and waiting there in vain for Bertrand Russell's appearance; write a thesis on Continuity, proving that it was impossible to prove anything and concluding that no universal proposition was true; visit Univ. of Chicago, hearing tin cans tied to automobiles on Michigan Ave on Nov. 11, '18; visit Grand Canyon of Arizona, University of California, getting tired of Richardson's Eletron Theory of matter; spend a week wrestling with gravity in Yosemite (gravity is the soul of weight!); and rush at top speed thru the Royal gorge just in time for the ½ 100-ennial celebration of Cornell, taking breaths once in a while (about 18 times per minute). Summer 1919, feast on geological science. Travel means so much more to one if one has a geological mental background.

Fall 1919. Said Ezra Cornell, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study." So I did. I found instruction in heat, light, electricity and magnetism and junior lab. I concluded that teaching agrees with me and *me* it. . . . April 20, 1920, Cablegram: Dr. H. L. Yen to Dr. T. Philip Sze. Get so and so to teach math at Tsing Hua. . . . to-morrow (July 15, 1920), 9 a.m. the transfer man will get my trunk to be checked from Itheca to San Francisco.

"I have told you *about* myself, not *of* myself yet. But sorry no time say much. I am not Henry Adams, so I'm glad. His was a brilliant "education," dazzling his readers and himself. Some of his paradoxes are delicious. But sometimes, he puts things in a ridiculous light as if to say "Look! here, again, the universe is out of joint." which means that the man himself is out of joint or affects to be. No, I have not been looking for an education. "No time" for this diversion. (Excuse my own Adamishness!) It is more profitable to inquire how to educate the world for itself than to inquire how to educate myself to fit a supposedly uncongenial universe. At worst the universe is non-congenial. Qu'en dites-vous?

"To treat you on more chattiog terms, I'll answer your question. I am going only for 20-21, after which I'll be back at Cornell for some real research. I might have a fancy for Tsing Hua that will bring me there later, but not till I have done something. I am writing on p. 3 and I have 101 things to say. No, count how many I have jotted down. . . . Yes, by 101, I mean about 49. I don't see how I can finish saying them, especially as I am saying nothing just now. Nothing won't never get me nowhere, you know. $((-1)^4 = +1)$ therefore Something gets me somewhere.

"I have met well-meaning society ladies who change the subject as soon as it gets interesting. So here moi aussi. No time to score my ideas, not even harmonize them, loosely joined on, no syntax

or style, nor cadence, just like my books and notes, love-letters (if any) wrapping tumblers and lamp bulbs, silk shirts (if any) wrapping hektograph ink and bicycle oil can :

"(1) Howler question : "Who was Socrates?" Ans. "He was one of the great divines, ranking with Confucius, Mohammet, Jesus, and Buda-Pesth"! (Prof. Hoernle's statement).

"(2) It is great fun to get behind the scenes. In 1918 I waited on a table at a meal or twn. It is a point of view one can not get without actually trying. At California. I rehearsed in the chorus on the Greek Theater with a professional Co., watching the self-important solo "acting the part," the stage-manager quarreling with the conductor, the super-men (*with* hyphen) flirting with super-other ("Supers are stage-fillers who don't sing), and at the performance, the King swore away stage directions at the priests. I never believe very much in open air music; musically, it was the bummest Aida I have heard (even if I had not been in it), but it was more instructive of life than the most realistic drama. Then, again, instructing is another behind the scenes. Yes, I have been rediscovering not to my surprize that people are after all very human. (Kindly inform me source of this witticism.) Human nature is in parts admirable, even worshipable, in parts improvable and needs much important at that. No, these 6.250.000.000 typhoid bacteria that lamed my arm recently are not the only vaccine I have been getting. Some doses of human nature for persons of sufficient idealistic resistence have the effect of making them immune. I have not lived much over a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a 100-ury yet, but I fancy I have at least a small amount of anticynicopessimistitoxin in me now.

"—— No Sir or ma'am either. If I keep on like this writing an essay on each of my 49 things er—— permit to be flighty and write them as they come :

"4. Gull's flight. San Francisco Bay, Beautiful, Graceful. Aerodynamics.

"5. Bolshevism. Read Russell's "Roads to Freedom." Have You? . . . .

"7. It will be fun to listen to wireless code on board if chance. ". . . . . — — . . — — . — — — ."

"8. Philosophical menu: Croquet of raisin puree, canned sance; spinez with Eggel; Plate o' beans. (to be continued—by *you*).

"9. Doppler effect, a hobby of mine, I am surprized to know so few people have noticed the sharp drop (= flatening) of pitch of bell of passing train, sometimes a major third. Other examples : road bell at grade crossing flattened (I mean run over of course!); whistle; Pitch of clatters of freight train; a big "rit al meno mosso" of tempo of puffs of passing train; Telling direction of airplane flight by pitch of buz; Velocity of stars in line of slight; Spectroanalysis; Relation to relativity; Apparent frequency or infreq'cy of letters during long travel to or from recipient; will you give me more examples please? (Jan., 1921. Tell direction of pigeons' flight, in Peking pigeons carry whistles). . . .

"11. Shantung? inlet for morphine. Acc. to look-up-able sources, opium grows in India, goes to England, thence to Philadelphia (!), thence to Japan, finally in thru trade-free Shantung. Hyperdermics a penny per. Pills cheap. No, Japan's anesthetics is deadlier than Japan's annexthetics.

"12. At Tsing Hua I shall teach math, do not know yet just what. I do know I shall not teach the following : People are like curves. Some people never meet. Others meet only once. When

they meet, there may be one or more points in common. If they have two points in common, they have a close contact. If they have three points in common, they are said to be osculating. Some curves are in a relation known as conjugate. But this does not necessarily imply that their relation is harmonic, for conjugate curves often diverge in contrary directions as poles and polars. When the relation is harmonic, or anharmonic it is said to be cross." (Source forgotten, will you remind me?)

"13. More animal analogs : Moth, Mammoth; canoe, volcanoe.

"14. Some things I'd like to write on : (11) How to catch myself. (24) The blessing of being busy. (28) How to draw accurately although a geometrician. (35) Conversation and correspondence compared. (57) Ragtime prose. (43) How to lose a friend (written). (47) 2 kinds of ordinal numbers. (48) 17 ways by which to see blood vessels of own retina. (63) Should the public speaker speak to the public? (I detest oratorical orators) (57) Alice in Ithaca.

"15. Skimming a book is not so bad if you can get the cream of it.

"16. Henry Adams : "Friends are born, not made." I say, Friends are born, *then* made. I have often made friends of acquaintences after a long period of mutual ignorance.

"17. You may accuse me of having made new friends, otherwise why don't I write to you oftener? No, Ma'am, I have made only two or three new friends since 1918. No Sir, either. Besides, don't you want me to have a lot of friends? 10 years ago, I thought I couldn't scrap with anybody. Later, I did get into scraps with one of my *friendest* friends. But I think I am now absolutely unscrapulous.

"18. The art of getting on with a friend is just like concerted music. We can never agree exactly on a tempo of one quarter note = 67.3 and expression of 3 pp+2 mf over 5, but if we agree each to try to follow the other's tempo and expression, them we have musical peace.

"19. When I tell you I am going home for a year, you may, naturally enough, become suspianxious, and think it is about time that somebody is somewhere and that something is going to happen sometime. "No ma'am," says I, "Nobody is anywhere, and nothing ever happens, so far as I foresee and intend." As a man intends, so does, or so don't he. Of course, nothing is impossible. For instance, it is "not impossible" that I become ambassador to Germany in 1922. But I have never proposed, and am not proposing to work towards making such a "not impossible" possible you see?

"20. Tell me all about your music, you will say, tactfully droping a difficult subject. All right, gladly, relievedly. Well, music has always been surreptitiating a good deal of my time and thought. I don't know exactly what it is to surreptitiate, but that's the way I feel about it. My piano is rented. Got a Boehm clarinet in B flat. I can now play it sufficiently so that only a *small* proportion of the notes I make are wrong notes or squalks.

Singing tenor in Cornell Festival Chorus was another eye opener (behind the scenes) and ear trainer. I have written some more stunts for the piano and some Chinese folk songs, and prepared with collaborative help some songs and yells for the C. S. Alliance.

"I said I had 49 things, but I had only 20. I still have my diary of three too short days. No, I won't copy it then. I have before me Coe's Psych. of Religion, Cabots What men Live By, Fosdick's the Manhood of the Master, Foster's the Finality of Chris-

tianity. Harnack's What is Christianity, Hocking's Meaning of God in Human Experience, Ames's The New Orthodoxy, Moulton's Modern Reader's Edition. One's work arouses in me a great respectful and admiring attitude, not because he elevates but because his to my mind honest attempt at being scientific and impartial is more elevating than less honest but well-meaning intentional elevators. (Men should be praught to as if you preached not.) You who know my moral character as an inellect may perhaps smile at me sitting before such an array of books, and say, "My dear Chao, I think you are growing old. You are hardly old enough yet to indulge in Leibnitzian deism and Newtonian dotage. (Will you tell me the source of this story about the pun on the dispute over *x* dot and *dx dt*?) Yes, but what impresses me is the enormous distances that separate people of dif. previous background. Once I sat with a companion opposite an elderly strange lady eating breaded fried liver and French fried potatoes at 11 p.m. at Childs on 42nd St. She opened a conversation: "Are you both Japanese? Don't worship the sun anymore. Come to our church. We are episcopalians. Give up your own religion, won't you?" Now if I want to be a good missionary, how can I be of help to such a "case?" On the other hand, I meet my countrymen who at bottom are like you and me, in fact more so. But they have been brought up in such form and style of thought that what terms are elsewhere of good repute do not connote to them that at all. One of the leaders at Silverbay asked me: "Are you a Christian?" Considering Christianity as you and I wish it might be made to mean, I would almost have said yes. But in order to speak in his language, I decided to be a little more orthodox in my usage and said No. Such a question sounds somewhat like "Have you stopt beating your wife?" It is, or ought to be, a recognizedly unfair epithetical question.

"My trip to Silverbay was more for seeing it as an institution than to fare farther in my religious journey, if any. This sounds rather supercilious of me, but you see, I am a "hard case," which facts is certainly no ground for conceit. Having browsed in the books as I have, it was somewhat of an anticlimax to listen to the speechings and sermonish orations. But my trip was certainly fully worth the while, not even counting Lake George and meeting friends. (1921 inserts "?" after "certainly.")

"I am begining to feel that I am actually conversing with you. As I am writing these lines, it is 2 a.m. to-morrow, and I must leave to-morrow P.M. Don't you think I have done fairly well to have made up this much for 2 years, that means a few hundred words a month to you. No, I've never done that to any man for 25 months together, nor no woman either. Now it is *your* turn to drop me a line or two and say: "Yours of July 13-15, 1920 has been glanced over, shall read it *when* and *if* I have time." "Please don't be so frivolous all the time," say you, "If I had to choose, I would rather think of you as

Mine Seriously,
YUEN REN CHAO."

and you replied that I was--that you were—that it seemed—that—well, since I can't reasonably request you to spent several decades with me talking, anyway not *most* of you, I shall not remind you what *you* said in reply to this first letter of mine, but begin now, without farther delay, and without adding a single unnecessary qualifying phrase, nay, not even wasting a single extraneous word that might with advantage be omitted for the sake of simplicity, directness, and brevity, in a word, without any *fuss* (preferring monosyllabic diction) I shall begin to say what I shall say in this letter of

2 Sui An Po Hutung,
Peking, China,
Jan. 32, 1921.

M—Name Surname, No. St., City Country.

My dear ———— :—

How do you do? You are quite well, thank me? Well, don't mention it. Now what shall I say? You wanted me to write you a long letter. But have I anything to say? I finished my last letter to you on July 15, 1920. So *one* of the things I am going to say to you in this letter will be what I have experienced from July 15, 1920 to Jan. 32, 1821:

At 10.28 a.m. I ate four cherries. Then addressed and stamped 89 letters. At 5.59 p.m., "P'ss—— ! Pss——!" and the Black Diamond Express Train was carrying me from Ithaca to Peking via Buffalo. Daylight saving time, local option time, Eastern and Central time and my watch keeping bad time; so this time, I had quite a time Buffalo to Chicago to Madison to Chicago, from time to time if not all the time. I wrote long diaries these days, of biscuits and teas, of packages and keys.

At times I looked forward to the condition where I can boast of will power to be teetotal under no legal compulsion or legal pretention. Looking ahead in my futuroscope I can precall an evening arriving at Tientsin with H. C. Zen, attending a Chinese feast and was forced, almost, to drink some al, but I succeeded in making myself queer. Later I did break my Tweedletolalum of my own initiative. So this is one shock for you.

But to come back to the present, after seeing the future, which at present writing was going back to the pluperfect train ride after the imperfect drinking. Chicago. There were three things open in Chicago on Sunday. Morning movie, 2nd hand bookstores, automat.

A fallacy in using statistics is a selection of cases not known to the collector, e.g., the passengers on the "Overland Limited" look well-bred, well intentioned, and well-off. But they don't represent a fair sample of Americans.

Finished reading H. G. Wells Time Machine and War of the Worlds in train. Studied a book on Cantonese. Mr. E. R. had recommended me Wells's books.

Frisco for 3rd time, no emotion for it. Took sight-seeing tour of Chinatown at night. I believe that most Americans in Frisco who are interested in what they think, or purposely represent, to be things Chinese ought to be executed, or at least no-longer-by-me tabooed-worded. Of course you of Calif, who know me or my like are OK, e.g., Ar.F., Lo.R., etc., of Calif.

LANGUAGE AT PLAY, Why. Are. See. January, 1971 -1-

1. Making Sense Out of Nonsense: The Story of My Friend Whose "Colorless Green Ideas Sleep Furiously" (after Noam Chomsky).

I have a friend who is always full of ideas, good ideas and bad ideas, fine ideas and crude ideas, old ideas and new ideas. Before putting his new ideas into practice, he usually sleeps over them to let them mature and ripen. However, when he is in a hurry, he sometimes puts his ideas into practice before they are quite ripe, in other words, while they are still green. Some of his green ideas are quite lively and colorful, but not always, some being quite plain and colorless. When he remembers that some of his colorless ideas are still too green to use, he will sleep over them, or let them sleep, as he puts it. But some of those ideas may be mutually conflicting and contradictory and when they sleep together in the same night they get into furious fights and turn the sleep into a nightmare. Thus my friend often complains that his colorless green ideas sleep furiously.

2. A Study in Zeroes:

There was a young girl from Mont.,
Whom everyone called "Oh, Sus."
It's a little too long.
But the name's in the song.
And she liked it much better'n just " ."

At a funeral in Friz.
A nephew was heir and bem.
When the ranch became his.
He shouted: "Geewhiz!
Now I'm really the ! I'm !"

There was an old book of ten pp.,
Containing the wisdom of ss.
But to learn it by heart.
Be you ever so smart.
You must read it for and .

The Chinese language needs no conj.
It joins words, words, sans comp.
But as for the v.,
Like medicinal ,
We treat it with awe and much .

Each poet has his pt. of v.,
Though he offers not much that is n.
As for mine, it is one
Which is really 0.
I, I like it that way, though, do

3. Five Stories in Quasi Homophones:

(1) Story in syllable shih, Encl. Brit. article on Chinese, 1960.
(2) " " " chi, ibid., article on Chinese, 1963.
(3) " " " I, Collier's Encl. art. on Chinese, 1964. (in collaboration with Tao Kiang)
(4) " " " hsi, Chao, Lang. & Symb. Systems, Cambridge 1968, p. 120.
(5) " " " ch'i

II. Four Stories in Quasi Homophones
(1st Tones unmarked)

(1) 石室诗士食狮史

石室诗士施氏，嗜狮，誓食十狮。氏时时适市视狮。十时，氏适市。适十狮适市。是时，氏视是十狮，恃十石矢势，使是十狮逝世。氏拾是十狮屍，适石室。石室湿，氏使侍拭拭石室。石室拭，氏始试食是十狮屍。食时，始识是十狮屍，实十石狮屍。是时，氏始识是实事实。试释是事。

Story of Stone Grotto Poet Eating Lions

Stone Grotto poet Shih by name was fond of lions and swore he would eat ten lions. The man from time to time went to the market to look at lions. When, at ten o'clock, he went to the market, it happened that ten lions went to the market. At this time the man looked at the ten lions and, relying on the momenta of ten stone arrows, caused the ten lions to depart from this world. The man picked these ten lions' bodies and went to the stone grotto. The stone grotto was wet and he made the servant try to wipe the stone grotto. The stone grotto having been wiped, the man began to try to eat the ten lions' bodies. When he ate them, he began to realize that those ten lions' bodies were really ten stone lions' bodies. Now he began to understand that that was the fact of the case. Try and explain this matter.

(2) 记饑鷄集機青

唧ㄔ鷄！鷄唧ㄔ！幾鷄擠ㄔ集機青。
機極疾，鷄饑極。鷄冀已救擊及鯽。
機既济劑畿，鷄计疾機激幾鯽。
機疾極，鯽極瘠。急ㄔ擠集磯級際。
繼即鯽迹極寂ㄔ。繼即幾鷄既饑即唧ㄔ！

Reminiscences of Famished Chickens Assembled on the Ridge of a (Flying) Machine

Chick, chick, chickens! Chickens, chick, chick!
Several chickens squeezed and assembled on the machine's ridge.
The machine was extremely swift; the chickens extremely famished.
The chickens surmised their skill was sufficient to strike some perch.
The machine having crossed the suburbs of Chi,
The chickens reckoned the swift machine should stir up several perch.
The machine was swift; the perch extremely scared.
Hastily they squeezed and assembled in the interstices of stone steps.
Subsequently the perch's traces were extremely silent, silent.
Subsequently the chickens, since still famished, said chick, chick!

(3) 憶漪姨医疫

漪姨悶ㄋ，召衣倚椅，疑異疫，宜詣医。医意，宜以蟻腺医姨疫。医以億ㄍㄍ億蟻。蟻一一殪，蟻腺溢。医移腺以医姨疫。姨疫以愈。姨怡ㄋ，以美衣貽医。医衣衣，亦怡ㄋ。噫！医以億蟻腺医漪姨疫，亦異已！漪姨以美衣貽医，亦益異已矣！

Reminiscences of How Aunt I was Cured

Aunt I felt depressed. She changed her clothes and reclined on a chair. Her idea was to suspect of some strange sickness. She should visit a doctor. The doctor's idea was that one should treat the aunt's sickness with the pancreas of ants. He took 100,000,000 arrows and hunted 100,000,000 ants. The ants one by one died. Their pancreases overflowed. The doctor removed the pancreases and treated the aunt's sickness with them. The aunt's sickness was thereby cured. She was joyful and presented her doctor with a foreign garment. The doctor put on the foreign garment and was joyful, too. Yes! the doctor took 100,000,000 ants' pancreases to cure Aunt I's sickness, wasn't that wonderful? Aunt I presented the doctor with a foreign garment, wasn't that even more wonderful, too?

(4) 嘻熙戲犀

西溪犀，喜嬉戲。嘻熙夕ㄋ携犀戲。
嘻熙細ㄋ看洗犀。犀吸溪，戲龍熙。
嘻熙嘻ㄋ希息戲。惜犀嘶ㄋ喜戲熙。

Hsi Hsi Plays with the Rhinoceros

West Creek Rhinoceros enjoys romping and playing.
Hsi Hsi every morning takes rhinoceros to play.
Hsi Hsi meticulously practices washing rhinoceros.
Rhinoceros sucks creek, playfully attacks Hsi.
Hsi Hsi, laughing, hopes to stop playing.
Too bad rhinoceros, neighing, enjoys attacking Hsi.

(5) 齊者妻

齊者七妻。其妻棄漆器。齊者氣，棄其七妻，騎騏起。七妻泣，乞其棲齊。齊者悽，慙氣棲齊。

Old Man Chi's Wives

The old man of Ch'i had seven wives. His wives threw away his lacquer ware. The old man of Ch'i was angry and, abandoning his seven wives, rode away on a unicorn. The seven wives cried, begging him to remain in Ch'i. The old man of Ch'i sadly rested his anger and remained in Ch'i.

A NOTE ON AN OLD CARROL MANUSCRIPT Y. R. C. Not for Publication -4

Shortly after the centennial of the publication of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, I visited the Widener Library of Harvard University to look up some points of punctuation in "Jabberwocky" in the well-known Carrollianna Collection and, to my great surprise and delight, I discovered an earlier text, all in Daniel Carr's characteristic handwriting, of which the usual version as I had always known it seemed to have been a badly corrupted caricature. No wonder Humpty Dumpty had to go to great lengths in his belabored etymologies when he tried to explain non-existent words like brillig and wabe! Now, with this original before me, what could be more rational than a boodberg writing Chinese homophones in the wade system of romanization? You see, being a looking-glass creature, Humpty Dumpty was not aware that b was simply the mirror image of d. I had to copy the poem in a hurry with paper and pencil, as it was nearing closing time and I had to stop. What mough remains to be discovered will have to be left to future adventures among the unedited mss of John B. Carrol, whose real name, as everyone knows, was Charles Christian Douglas. So I am going to read to you now the original, uncorrupted text, rediscovered by me and published for the first time, of—not Jabberwocky—but:

JAKOBSONY

'Twas boodberg, and the sliding tones
  Did hoijer and haugen[1] in the wade;
All sememe were the homophones,
  And emeneaus outgrade.

Beware the Jakobson, my ward![2]
  The joos that pine, the hamp that hoas!
Beware the voegelin bird and shen
  The friesian bender cross!

He took the vocal cords in hahn:
  Long time on Malkiel Hill he fought,
So reifler-li by the sebeok[3] tree,
  He hocked twaddell in thought.

And as in Edgerton Hall he hocked,
  The Jakobson, with milk of cowan,
Came whistelling through the traeger smith
  And buffaloed as it known.

One, two! One two! And hu is hu?
  The verbal bloch went hocus-poc!
He household Fred, and with his sleod
  He gleasoned to Kroeber's Locke.

And horrist thou lane the Jakobson?
  Come to my holmes, my beelerch boy!
Oh, whitfield day! Kurath! Corré!
  He chortled[4] in his joy!

'Twas boodberg, and the sliding tones
  Did hoijer and haugen in the wade;
All sememe were the homophones,
  And emeneaus outgrade.

[1] These were loan words from Old Bulgarian.

[2] Jabberwock, my son was obviously a corruption through metathesis.

[3] Take the kun reading, in reduplicated form. The ms also showed another reading: Tung Tung tree, an oleoferous tree of Formosa, growing on the banks of the Tung Tung Ho

[4] According to Kurath, this was a dialect word of SE United States, where is diphthonized as [ɑɔ].

Berkeley, Allophonia
November [illegible], 196[illegible]

Key to Jakobsony

Line	Name
5	Carr, Donzel
11	Boodberg, Peter A.
15	Paper, Herbert H.
	Penzl, Herbert
16	Whatmough, Joshua
17	Carroll, John B.
18	Chrétien, C. Douglas

Verse	Name
1	Hoijer, Harry
	Haugen, Einar
	Emeneau, Murray B.
2	Jakobson, Roman
	Ward, Ralph L.
	Joos, Martin
	Pike, Kenneth L.& Eunice
	Hamp, Eric P.
	Haas, Mary R.
	Voegelin, Charles F.
	Bird, Donald A.
	Shen, Yao
	Fries, Charles C.
	Bender, Ernest
	Cross, Ephraim
3	Hahn, E. Adelaide
	Markwardt, Albert H. ~
	Melkiel, Yakov
	Hill, Archibald A.

Verse	Name
3	Reifler, Erwin
	Li, Fang-kuei
	Sebeok, Thomas A.
	Hockett, Charles F.
	Twaddell, W. Freeman
	Edgerton, Franklin
4	Hall, Robert A., Jr.
	Cowan, J Milton
	Birdwhistel, Ray L.
	Trager, George L.
	Smith, Henry Lee
	McQuown, Norman A.
5	Hu, Shih
	Bloch, Bernard
	hocus-pocus (theory)
	Householder, Fred W.
	Sledd, James H.
	Gleason, Henry A., Jr.
	Kroeber, Alfred
	Locke, William N.
6	Harris, Zellig S.
	Lane, George S.
	Holmes, Urban T.
	Beeler, Madison S.
	Bloomfield, Leonard ~
	Whitfield, Francis J.
	Kurath, Hans
	Corré, Alan D.
Note 3	Chang, Kun
	Tung, Tung Ho
Note 4	Chao, Y. R.

5. REVERSED SPEECH

(1) Examples of looking at things in reverse.

(2) Trnascribing Reversed English, BIHP 2.2.205-223 (1930), with HMV CC 1759b: Sir Richard Paget's imitation of George Bernard Shaw.

(3) Text of reversed Shaw: I am asked to give you a specimen of spoken English. But first, let me give you a warning. [If you have heard my voice before, you] will have no difficulty. You have just to change the speed [of your gramophone], until you recognise the voice you remember. But what are you to do if you have never heard me? Well, I can give you a hint that will help. If what you hear is very disappointing, and you feel instinatively, that must be horrid man, you may be quite sure the speed is wrong. Slow it down until you feel that you are listening to an amiable gentleman of seventy-one, with a rather pleasant Irish voice, then that is me. All the other people whom you hear at the other speeds are impostors, sham Shaws, phantoms, who never existed.

(4) What is one sound (segment)? shush, sis, but church, George.

(5) "Long vowels"; sauce, cease, but babe, known.

(6) Clear and dark l: milk: klim; nilk: loin 'not lin)

(7) Aspiration:

tea:eat tar:art star:arts
Ton tuteur te tenta; tu tenta ton tuteur; tous tes traits tentatifs tentèrent ton tentateur.

(8) Tone and intonation: the Chinese numerals from 1 to 10.

(9) Palidromes: Graphic: Able was I ere I saw Elba.

Phonetic: Madam, I am Adam.
Did you say we are dead, Bob?
Ahaha, Bob, dead, are you?
Yes, we did.

(10) Shaw's speech reversed and re-reversed: ditsizgiravenuh...

6. REVERSED MUSIC

(11) Value of notes: scale legato and scale slurred by twos.

(12) Scooping and anticipation.

(13) Piano music reversed.

(14) Singing in reverse.

Compiled by Anwar S. Dil

k. (Tr)海王星之發現 [The discovery of Neptune, by David Rines]. KH 1:12.1359-76.

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Compiled by Anwar S. Dil

from Aspects of Chinese Sociolinguistics: Essays by Yuen Ren Chao. Selected and introduced by Anwar S. Dil. Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 1976

List of Abbreviations:

BIHP	Bulletin of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica
HJAS	Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
KH	科學 [K'o-hsueh] Science
KYCK	國語週刊 [Kuo-yü Chou-k'an] National Language Weekly
Lg	Language
(M)	Musical composition
(Tr)	Translation

1915 a. 心理學與物質科學之區別 [The difference between psychology and the physical sciences]. KH 1:1.14-21.
b. (M) 和平進行曲 [March of Peace, a piano composition]. KH 1:1.120-21.
c. (Tr) 科學與經歷 [Science and experience, from E. B. Titchener, Textbook of Psychology]. KH 1:2.130-34.
d. 能力 [On energy]. KH 1:2.145-56.
e. 永流電 [Perpetual current]. KH 1:2.222-23.
f. 永動機 [Perpetual motion machines]. KH 1:3.275-82.
g. (Tr) 無線電 [Wireless telegraphy, by Robert W. King]. KH 1:5.526-34; 1:6.635-43.
h. 地果圓乎，地果動乎：自轉，地果動乎：公轉 [Three dialogues on the earth: I. Shape; II. Rotation; III. Revolution]. KH 1:7.812-23; 1:8.937-49; 1:9.1056-65.
i. (M) 八板湘江浪合調 [Arrangement of the folk tunes 'Eight Beats' and 'Waves of the Siang Kiang']. KH 1:7.835-36.
j. 用數 [On the use of numbers]. KH 1:10.1111-27.

k. (Tr) 海王星之發現 [The discovery of Neptune, by David Rines]. KH 1:12.1359-76.

1916 a. 地船 [Our ship the Earth]. KH 2:2.159-75.
b. 說時 [On time]. KH 2:6.603-21; 2:10.1083-95; 2:11.1179-86.
c. 飛行機黑夜落地法 [How aeroplanes land at night]. KH 2:3.340-41.
d. (Tr) 烟煤之四害 [Four points in the smoke nuisance] [J. O'Conner, Jr.'s article in Popular Science Monthly 87 (Sept. 1915), 244-49.] KH 2:8.882-88.
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b. 紙連環 [Moebius strips]. KH 3:1.60-67.
c. 睡眠之衛生 [The hygiene of sleeping time]. KH 3:5.603-5.
d. 一百金圓之道德實驗 [A $100 experiment on morality]. KH 3:6.707-9.
e. 瞳孔翕張之試驗 [Seeing the effect of change in one's own pupil]. KH 3:8.909-12.
f. 催眠術解惑 [Hypnotism explained]. KH 3:9.938-49; 3:11.1166-74.
g. 生物界物質與能力代謝之比較 [Comparison between the transformation of matter and that of energy in the biological world]. KH 3:12.1262-65.

1918 a. (M) 偶成 [An incidental idea]. [A piano piece.] KH 4:1.xii.
b. 紙坑學跳之迷信 [The fallacy of learning the high jump by using a paper-filled pit]. KH 4:2.204-6.
c. (Tr) 七又中又个禮日 [Three Sundays in a week, by Edgar Allan Poe]. KH 4:4.391-97.

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